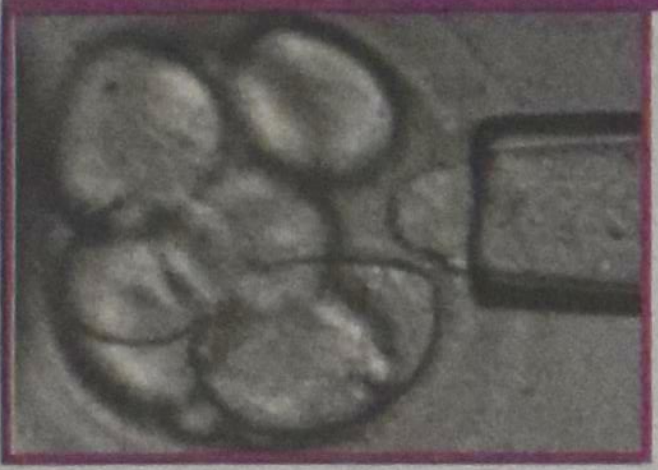
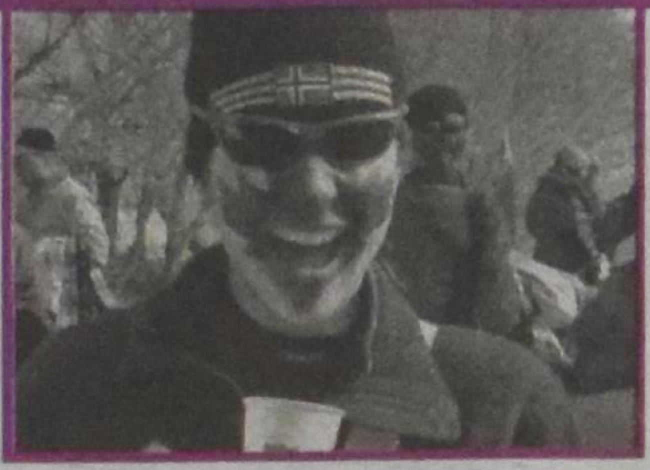


Stem cell dilemma
PAGE 6



Hero worship?
PAGE 7

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A narrow deliverance from Mugabe's wrath

Bert Witvoet

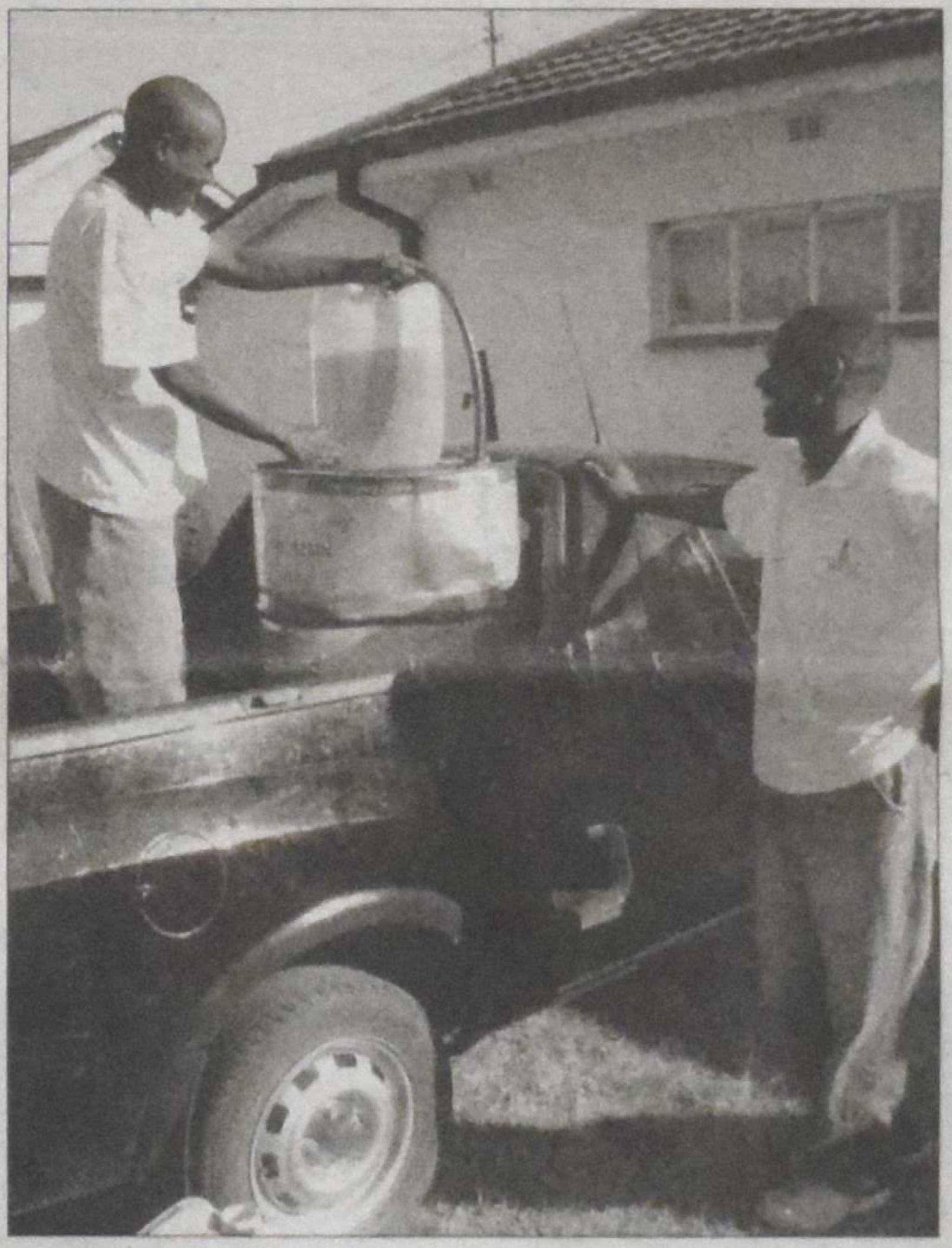
St. Catharines, ON – The story of Takawira Kupakuwana's escape from Zimbabwe to Canada is one of these amazing acts of divine providence that takes one's breath away. Here is a man of 41, a husband and a father of four, who used to be the district administrator of one of the 59 districts of Zimbabwe, sitting in our family room with the Rev. John Suk of Cobourg, who, with his wife, Irene, made a decision seven years ago while they lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that would change their lives, the life of their son, William, the life of their unofficial foster daughter Gillian, and certainly the life of Takawira, often referred to as Taka.

Taka's life was in danger after the 2008 national election, no doubt about it. Robert Mugabe's henchmen were after him after they decided that Taka had not done enough to manipulate the voters in his district into voting for Mugabe. Government officials had carefully explained to Taka that he should distribute most of the resources that the government provided for farmers (seed, equipment and plowing services) in those areas where voters had shown loyalty to ZANU-PF. But Taka, who was not really interested in politics, thought that such an uneven distribution of government support would leave too many farmers without much-needed help.

Need for action

When the votes were tallied (the outcome of which took months to be released by ZANU-PF because they knew that Robert Mugabe had lost), it came to the attention of the government that one of the rural constituencies in one of the districts administrated by Taka had voted for Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). They held Taka responsible. Something had to be done. And something was done.

Most people in Zimbabwe know from other assassination attempts that ZANU-PF favours car accidents as the final solution to its problems. And so it happened that Taka, who is often on the road for his government work, was driving his light pick-up truck one day on a very straight piece of highway with very little traffic. He had a given another man a ride. Someone driving a much heavier land cruiser with heavy bars for bumpers came towards him from the opposite direction. (In Zimbabwe the traffic is on the left-hand, with the driver sitting on the right-hand side of the vehicle.) The land cruiser gained speed and, as it was approaching, moved into Taka's lane. Taka hugged the left shoulder to avoid being hit head-on by the land cruiser. But its driver kept on drifting toward him until he smashed into the side of Taka's pick-up truck.



Taka (on the right) when he was still District Administrator, overseeing an employee siphoning black-market fuel into a drum needed for government business.

Taka felt the impact of the crash on the right side of his head. Glass splinters from the windows entered his head. He was dazed, bleeding badly and unable to realize what had happened.

See **Deliverance** *on p.2*

Voting to protect Honduras

Guillermo Fiallos Aguilar

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras – Against the opinion of the Organization of American States (OAS), Río's Forum, and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), a general election took place in Honduras on November 29 with the presence of more than 300 international observers and hundreds of journalists. The participation of voters was extraordinary – more than 62 percent of people registered in the national electoral census voted. Earlier, the main leaders of Protestant and Catholic Honduran Churches had strongly encouraged people to vote. Citizens of all ages and social classes stood for hours in large lines in order to vote, despite the threats of terrorist attacks that had shaken the country in previous weeks.

Gustavo Orellana, a retired man, said to *CC*: "The elections are an opportunity to leave the crisis behind, and for Honduran people to express their will." He elaborated, "We are tired of persons from other countries, governments and international organizations telling us what we must to do with our nation."

Problematic president

This general election was a chance to end the nightmare that began almost four years ago, when Manuel Zelaya was elected president of the republic. He betrayed his own political party, the National Constitution and his own country. He is a wealthy land-owner who confessed some months ago in a public broadcast that he won the presidency in 2005 through fraud. This news stunned Hondurans, but it was only one of the many errors of Zelaya.

Last spring, Zelaya tried to change the constitution to allow himself to remain in power past his four-year term, similar to what has happened in Venezuela. Zelaya was legally ousted in June in a move supported by the National Congress (Parliament). Since then, he has been accused of 18 faults and criminal charges,

See **Honduras** *on p.3*

News

A narrow deliverance *continued*

Taka was transported to the Harare hospital, where he stayed for a week, after which doctors decided he should be moved to a hospital in Pretoria, South Africa, in case he needed neurosurgery. It was clear that Taka suffered from severe head injuries that affected his mind and his speech. Taka stayed in Pretoria for six months. He does not know what happened to the driver who had steered into his truck.

Lame excuse

The real motive behind the attempt at Taka's life became clear when he, against the advice of friends and family, returned to Zimbabwe to again take up his duties as district administrator.

The right side of Taka's head shows the injuries he incurred during the "accident." As a result of the crash, Taka suffered amnesia and brain injury. Pieces of glass are still embedded in his head. His ear is damaged. He feels pain in one leg.

He received a letter that stated his position as District Administrator had been filled, because the administrative committee did not know where he was. That was strange, as they had given him an official sick leave. And Taka knew that the secret police kept track of where he had been. They had even sent an intelligence officer to Pretoria to visit him in the hospital and monitor his contacts.

Another attempt

Stung by the deceptive actions of the supporters of Mugabe, Taka decided to launch a lawsuit against those who had taken away his position. That was a brave but probably somewhat foolish decision, resulting in a second attempt against his life. It happened the night that Taka was supposed to be home (his wife and children live in another town where he has a second home), but he told his house maid that he would try to catch a ride with a friend to Harare, and that he might or might not be back in time to sleep in his own bedroom. It turned out that his friend thought it would be too late to make the trip to Harare and back. He suggested Taka stay the night and make the journey to Harare the next day.

That night, men broke into Taka's bedroom and ransacked the room, taking several of his possessions including his legal and administrative papers. The maid heard the noises, but, thinking that Taka had returned, did not investigate. The fact that the thieves had taken his official government papers told the story: this was no ordinary burglary. This had been orchestrated by ZANU-PF, and there was little doubt in Taka's mind that, had he been home, they would have beaten the life out of him.

From thereon, Taka had to live the life of a fugitive. He was no longer safe in Zimbabwe.

A life-changing decision

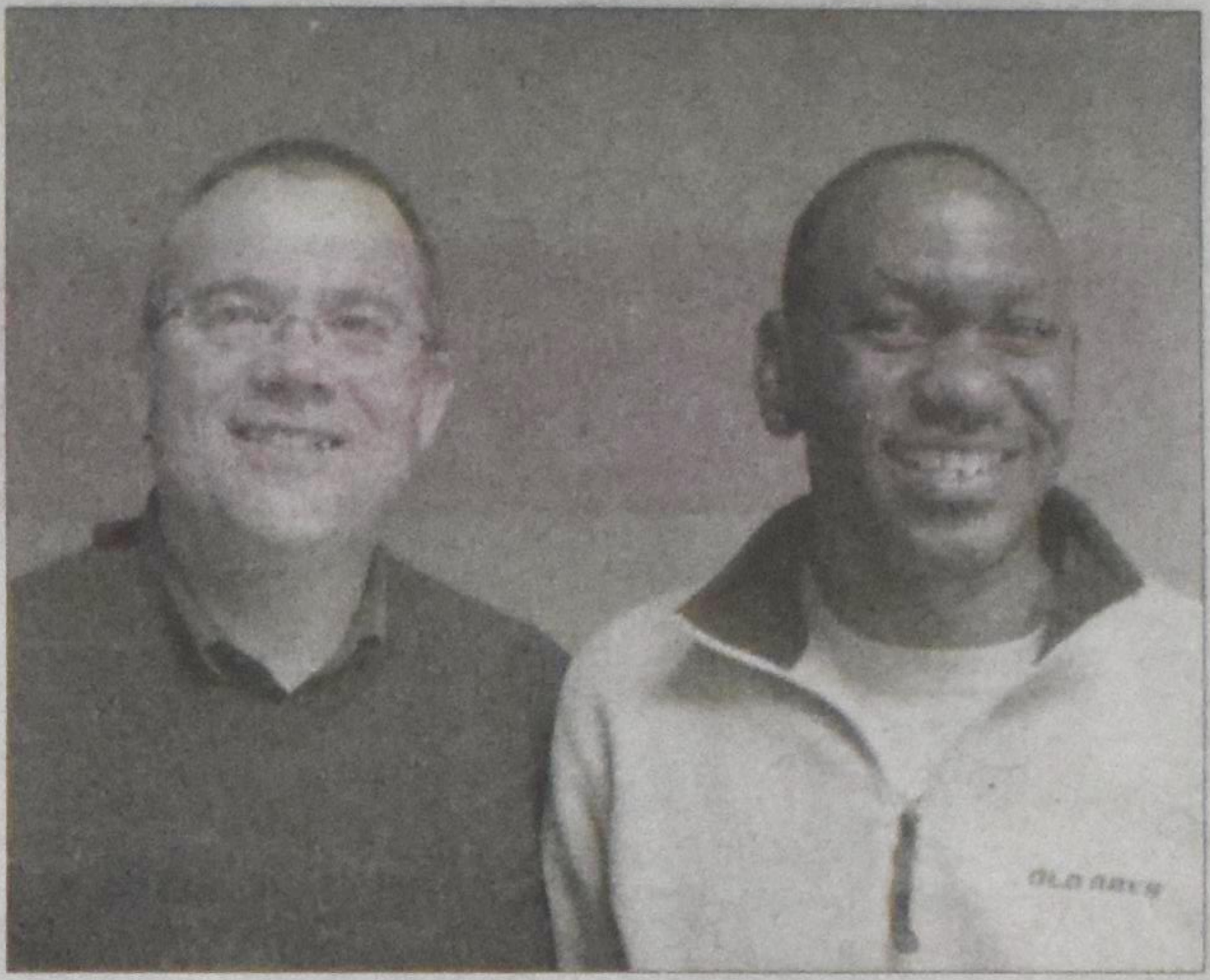
That was also the conclusion that William Suk and Gillian Kupakuwana had come to. Taka is Gillian's brother. And here is where the story of John Suk and Irene Oudyk-Suk comes into play. Seven years ago, John and Irene, who at that time lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan (John was the editor of *The Banner*), decided to co-sponsor with the local Rotary Club a girl from Zimbabwe named Gillian Kupakuwana. It was a year-long exchange, based on a Zimbabwe Rotary scholarship. The Rotary Club would take care of all her expenses, and John and Irene would open their home to her. She stayed with them for three months of the year-long exchange. Afterwards, Gillian returned to Zimbabwe.

Nine months later, Gillian was back in Grand Rapids. Both the Rotary and the Suks had been deeply impressed by Gillian's ability and grace, and they decided to have her continue her studies in the U.S. since the school system in Zimbabwe had become dysfunctional. She wanted to become a registered nurse. The Suks paid for her ticket, and promised to take care of tuition. The Rotary Club provided accommodations. Gillian studied at the Grand Rapids Community College for two years. By that time she had grown from a meek and subservient girl to an independently-minded woman. She announced to the Suks that she wanted to study for a B.S. degree in chemistry at the local university. And that's what happened. After that, her marks were so good that she succeeded in getting a full scholarship to take post-graduate studies in bio-chemistry at the University of Syracuse. She graduates in May.

Unexpected romance

Somewhere during that time in her journey, John and Irene's son William, who had studied in India and South America, took an interest in his parents' foster-daughter, and she in him. Just over a year later they were engaged, and today they are married. Both are finishing their PhD. work at the University of Syracuse. Gillian is a much-sought-after researcher in bio-chemistry (DNA markers), and William is finishing his degree in anthropology. As part of that program he presents at anthropology conferences to talk about his unique approach to teaching students about victims of xenophobia and political persecution. William uses Skype in class to talk with victims of oppression right across the globe.

And here is where Taka comes into William's anthropological pursuits. William and Gillian were able to convince the Canadian embassy in Harare to issue a visa to Taka. They presented the embassy with a specific objective of the trip to Canada. Taka would attend an academic conference at Concordia University in Montreal to speak about violence in Zimbabwe. At this Montreal conference William would demonstrate that, in his seminars, he makes Skype contact with victims of oppression. What better way to show how he uses Skype than to bring to the conference a Skype contact (his own brother-in-law) and let him speak to the conferees in person.



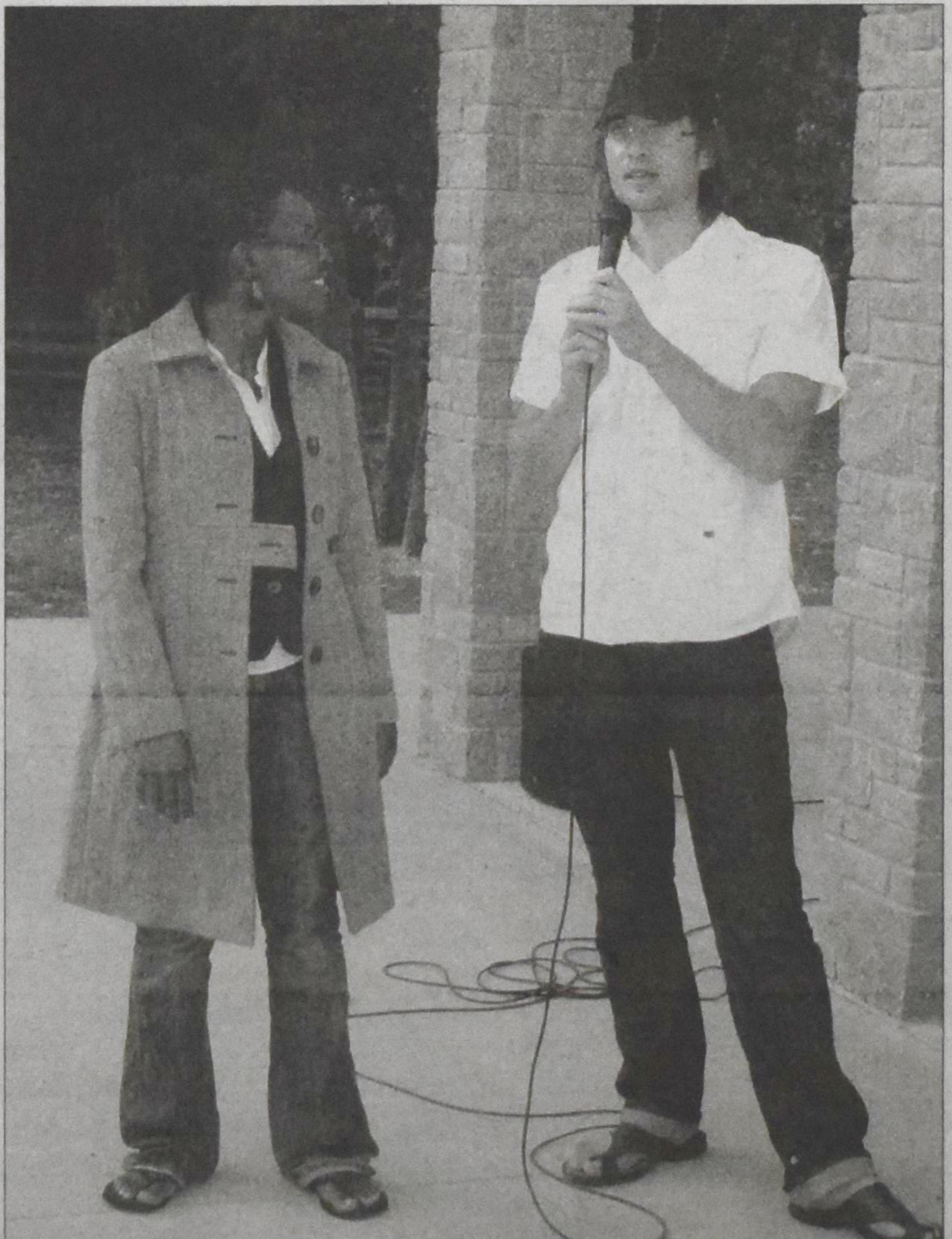
John Suk and Taka in the Witvoet home in St. Catharines.

God at work

The Canadian embassy in Harare approved the request. Of the 30 applicants that asked for a visa that day in Harare, Taka was the only one who received one. The Suks are quite convinced that the embassy people knew that Taka was in danger, and that, once in Canada, he would ask for asylum. They showed extra-ordinary concern for his safety. Taka has done what they must have anticipated. He asked for asylum four days ago. Today, John Suk is taking him to see Niagara Falls. Taka, who has seen the mighty Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, may well come to the conclusion that Niagara Falls is okay, but ... William and Gillian, who live in Syracuse, New York, will meet him and John on the Canadian side of the Falls for a brief family reunion.

Gillian's father wrote John one day: "I can no longer be a father to my daughter Gillian. I would like you to be her father." That was before son William laid eyes on Gillian and Gillian became John and Irene's daughter-in-law. And it was way before Taka stepped into the home of the Suks in Mississauga on November 10 this year.

The Suk family is deeply impressed by the fact that God has been behind this endeavour from beginning to end. Who would have thought that a small token of support for a Zimbabwean girl called Gillian seven years ago would have brought them so much joy and satisfaction in having become entwined with a family named Kupakuwana somewhere in Zimbabwe?



Gillian and William at the wedding reception in Sarnia, after the wedding, which had taken place in Zimbabwe.

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

There's no such thing as empty ritual

My son has his own bed-time ritual. Once snuggled under the covers, he expects a parent to share a story, sing him a song, pray with him, and then give him a hug and kiss good-night. It's a cozy but official way to end the day, a way to condition him for sleep, and it provides him with a sense of stability and security. It will be a good memory for him when he parts company with us to find his way in the world.

The evening ritual is also much more than that. *All rituals are more than they appear.* There has apparently been a revival of appreciation for the power of ritual in the world of Religious Studies, but it is with little thanks to the Reformation. Says scholar J. Z. Smith, for example: "Ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention … this sharply distinguishes our understanding from that of the Reformers, with their all too easy equation of ritual with blind and thoughtless habit."

There is, of course, a context to the Reformers disdain of ritual, and this has to do with the perceived abuse of religious ritual in the day. But some Reformed folk are also recovering an appreciation of ritual – not just at home and in church, but in our very thinking about God's way of shaping us for love and service.

Smithian ritual

I'm especially thinking about Calvin professor James K. A. Smith's new book entitled *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker, 2009). Smith, as a Reformed Pentecostal in the Augustinian tradition, offers therapy for those unwittingly shaped by the intellectual excesses of the Enlightenment. He wants to recover all things incarnational – embodied – in the historic Christian tradition.

First he needs to establish one basic fact: people are not just thinking heads. Heads have bodies. And contrary to what is indirectly communicated in an over-emphasis on "worldview" education, the body and its feelings and movements govern much about how we see and what we believe about the world. *Because we are first of all lovers, not thinkers.* Descartes was wrong in postulating, "I think therefore I am." More foundational than our brain waves are the rhythms of our heart.

This is where ritual comes in. Rituals, by putting the body in familiar motions, shape our loves and desires. They aim us towards particular goals or objects. Sure, some rituals are thin and mundane, like tying your shoes. Other rituals may shape us to love the wrong object, for example, ourselves – like annual elective plastic surgery. But good rituals, like evening prayers or a church service that turns our attention towards the life, death and resurrection of Christ – these can shape our love for the kingdom of God. Advent calendars, Lenten fasts, Thanksgiving services: these deep, thick rituals Smith calls *liturgy* and they can aim us for a full-orbed shalom.

A ritual audit

So there is no such thing as a "meaningless ritual" – even if some are "thicker" than others. "Going through the motions" is, in fact, the way we train our hearts and thus direct our lives.

This begs the question: what rituals frame our life, and if we reflected on them long enough, towards what kingdom are they shaping our heart? What love do they grow inside us?

Smith calls this "an audit" of your ritual life. For those with children, the questions continue: what cultural practices do you want your kids to adopt or avoid? How can your household creatively implement thick rituals or liturgies that shape your hearts for a full-orbed kingdom of God life?

We may find our life inadvertently revolving around shopping rituals. Mall trips that have become therapy, recreation, and ultimately, the basis of a postmodern brand-named personal identity. Or maybe we have regular on-line rituals – visits to specific web-sites that fill our imagination with a jumble of distractions (computer game violence, sexual arousal, or just plain silliness).

Then there are thicker rituals of shalom-making. I know of one family that recently decided to eat a rice-and-bean meal once a week – as a way of identifying with the poor of the world and easing off their meat consumption. There is another family that embraces "the rule of the foot." If they have to go somewhere that is a walkable distance, they resolve to hike it. Likewise with biking. Smoke-free transportation.

Whatever your body does, it necessarily carries the heart and the head with it. New Year's Eve is a spectacular ritual-formation opportunity. The common practice of making resolutions is commendable. But it will be the routines and rituals that we implement that change our heart, our head, and thus our life, family, and church. Far from being empty, rituals are radical, redemptive, and rich.

Peter Schuurman lives in Guelph, Ontario where he parents his two children, Joseph and Petra. He is is working toward a PhD and teaches World Religion at Redeemer.

Voting to protect Honduras *continued from page 1*

and has chosen to stay as a "special guest" of the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa for more than two months. Zelaya and his national and foreign followers tried to boycott the November election. The election took place without incident, however, and Hondurans lawfully elected José Porfirio Lobo from the opposition party: Partido Nacional (National Party). Lobo lost four years ago the elections which Zelaya won.

José Porfirio Lobo

Lobo is a rich farmer with conservative ideas, and he kept an ambiguous position in relation to what happened in June. Nevertheless, he is a well-spoken and congenial man with extensive political experience, including presidency of the National Congress. Five candidates participated in the election, from left to right of the political spectrum. Lobo was ahead of the nearest contender by fifteen percent of the votes.

Crisis averted

Now, Hondurans hope to find a way to peace and reconciliation. There is a sense that they saved democracy and the Constitution of the Republic that Zelaya intended to violate. Hondurans also expect that international response – previously supportive of Zelaya – will finally change. After the ouster in June, many countries cut off aid to Honduras and refused to recognize the interim government as legitimate. However, as Ana Zapata, a woman of limited financial resources, said to *CC*: "The governments of many countries have punished the poor people in Honduras with their social and economic measures, not the Honduran provisional government."

But there is a tiny light. Some governments have recognized the elections as legal, including the USA, Perú, the Czech Republic, Israel, Poland, Costa Rica, Panamá, Colombia and Taiwan. Some report that Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, congratulated the winner of the presidential elections, José Lobo. In a press release on December 1, Kent said that "The elections were an important first step in restoring Honduras to democratic legitimacy."

As in any elections there are winners and losers. The political analysts agree that the great winner is the Honduran people, who defended with their votes their future, dignity, freedom and democracy. The great loser, perhaps, is ex-President Zelaya and his commander-in-chief, Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela who found in Honduras his first Waterloo.

Guillermo Fiallos Aguilar is CC's Honduran correspondent. He teaches at the post-graduate level, has published ten books, and writes for some Honduran newspapers and as a freelance in television. He lives with his family in Tegucigalpa.

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Guest Editorial

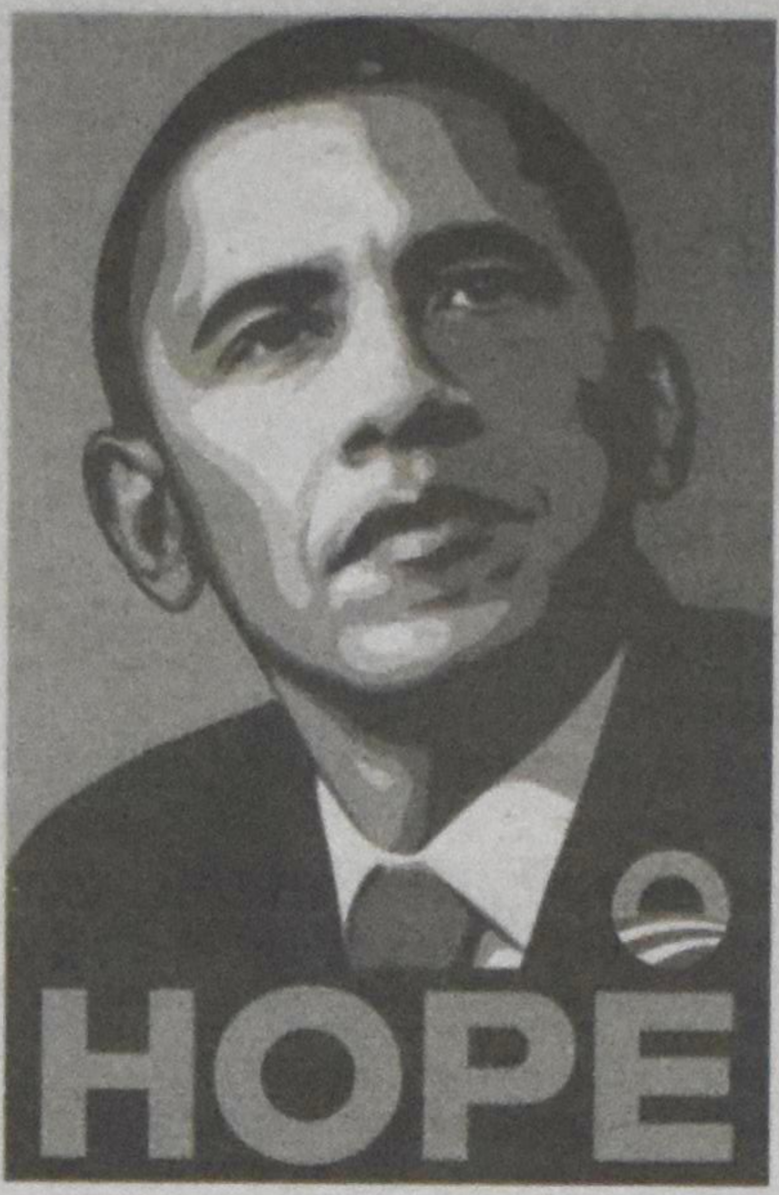
Through a two-way mirror, darkly

Meredith K.C. Gipson Hoogendam

From where I sit in this pleasantly nouveau-bohemian coffee shop, aromatic Sumatra drifting comfortably through the (im)partially gentrified air, I can see the dirty vestiges of a city in decline, but also evidence of a neighborhood in renewal. Out the window to my right, my line of sight is consumed by the marble cross and towering steeple of a century church. I know if I packed up my computer and bundled up to walk down the street I would pass crack houses, colourful murals, graffiti tags, lonesome city dwellers, and, if I was lucky, perhaps even a few scattered lovebirds.

I have been here for nearly three hours, surfing the Internet, re-reading old emails, and staring up at the oversized poster of Barak Obama – the one that features him in quasi-angelic repose, his countenance turned upward toward the heavens, the entire image underscored (in all caps, of course) by the word, "HOPE." Here in Buffalo, New York, a city divided by poverty and racism, words of hope from this jazzy, nonwhite leader of the free world have energized and empowered citizens to extend their thoughts beyond years of broken promises, economic downturns and racial strife to dream of something bigger and better for their city.

In this locally-owned coffee shop, the Christmas season has officially begun, as evidenced by the saccharin cheer of the holiday jingles that blast through the speakers overhead. I am in the city on business – or at least, as accomplice to my husband, who is here to help facilitate a design charette for our friends' nonprofit organization. This group works with urban youth who are fighting to live optimistically and proactively in a system that does everything possible to annihilate such idealistic aspirations. Our friends, who are one another's life and business partners, give all of the forty hours and most of the remaining 128 hours of their week to working with urban youth, and they understand the cracks – or perhaps more fittingly, the infinitely deep abysses – in the system that these kids struggle to pull themselves out of.



Any hope?

These friends are familiar with such systemic black holes because they themselves exist on the margins of a society where their inalienable rights are often in threat. In a city divided by race, both friends are neither black nor white but interracial. In a country where a woman still makes around seventy-five cents for every man's dollar, these female friends work their fingers to the bone in the fiscally unstable nonprofit sector. In a religion consumed by controversy over issues of sex and gender, these Christian women have just celebrated the second anniversary of their marriage to one another. It is 2009, and the western world remains the kingdom of the white, capitalistic, nominally Christian North American male. Brown, female, socialist, gay and Christian – I look again at the oversized poster of Obama, and I wonder if there is any hope for our friends – or any of us, for that matter – in the new year.

Despite differences in ethnicity, gender or class, hometown, last name or credit rating, as the calendar fumbles toward January in the small silent hours before the clock strikes 12:01 a.m., each of us asks the same question: *Is it safe to hope?* Our knuckles are white as we submit our query to the great beyond, and with good reason. It is 2009, and we have many reasons to be afraid. Hoping, like loving, is never practical or reasonable, and, if we were really smart, we wouldn't have anything to do with it. With babies holding machine guns and dictators holding their own countrymen hostage, how can we hope? With melting glaciers and empty pockets, how can we hope? With brain tumors and cirrhosis and mass flu panic and her mastectomy and his dementia, how can we hope? With the oxygen tank and the scars on the lungs and no money for the treatment and no one coming to visit, how can we hope? With the absence of the ones we loved the most; with the empty womb and the caskets filling the graves, how can we hope? It is 2009, and the human race is still at war, still fighting, still killing. We are still poisoning our land, still putting money before stewardship, and ourselves before our neighbors. We are still looking at the speck and ignoring the log. With all of that, who in their right mind would even bother to hope?

The privileged few

I rattle off these thoughts on my bells-and-whistles laptop knowing that I am one of only ten percent or so of people on this entire spinning globe who has the luxury of place and power to ask such questions. I am well-fed, well-loved, and well-positioned to interrogate myself and my socioeconomic peers on what we are doing to change the world for those who do not have the resources to reach out beyond their own situations. And yet, even as I recognize my position of power in this world, I realize that when it comes down to a thing like hope, it doesn't really matter who I am, where I am, or what resources I do or do not have access to. Unlike monetary wealth or safe drinking water, hope is not the purveyance or property of the overdeveloped world. In fact, hope has nothing to do with boundaries (real or imagined, policed or open); money (in excess or in lack); race; ethnicity; sexuality; political party; or even religion. Hope is available to all human hearts in all places and at all times. Whether we allow ourselves to hope, even when it is most inadvisable, is another story.

Regardless of variations in doctrine, age, ethnicity, gender or any other of the many wild and wonderful things that make each person a unique manifestation of our infinitely creative Creator, one thing we share is our space in this spot: all of us, muddled and dirty and confused human beings find ourselves hanging together, dangling precariously over the fragile frightening chasm that separates 2009 from 2010.

Weak and enabled

In this uncomfortable space, we have no other choice but to support one another, knowing only that we humans are mostly blind and that the glass we see through, we see through darkly. Blind, vulnerable, dependant and weak – it is when we are blessed enough to recognize our own state of being that hope becomes flesh and begins its hard and lovely work in this bright and broken world.

In recognizing our weakness, we Christians are perfectly poised to be used by God and enabled by the Holy Spirit to manifest the healing of brokenness in all of its forms. As we do so, we become vehicles of hope for the rest of humanity. When others see the hungry fed, the naked clothed, and the thirsty quenched, they find hope. Feeding, clothing, quenching, comforting – these actions, though taken by weak, blind, and dependent human beings evidence Christ's work in and through us. To extend a second chance to the youth who tagged our house with graffiti, to suspend judgment when we are faced with a person who acts in a way that offends our doctrine, to recognize our own hypocrisy when we would prefer to cling stubbornly to our infallibility, to openly admit our own ignorance – these are the works of a God who is not afraid of our pettiness and small dark corners.

While we wrap ourselves in the tattered threads of practicality, prudence, and resignation, our pyrotechnic God flaunts hope so brazenly even the most blind of humanity is stricken to sight by his healing colours. May Christ's curative fireworks consume our complacency and replace it with fearless hope in this New Year.

A high school teacher and sometime writer, M.K.C. Hoogendam (khoogendam@gmail.com) lives in unintentional community with her husband, cousin, and two zippy canines in the wilds of urban Ontario.

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Rotary scho...

New therapies available

I read with interest Ray Vander Kooij's question to Rudy Eikelboom in the *CC* of November 23 with respect to understanding the links between the brain, mind, and experience of oneself in the world, as well as Rudy's response to Ray's question. I attended a two-day training event in Toronto (for therapists, doctors, psychologists, and social workers) a few years ago, on the topic: Compassion-Focussed Therapy. This is a new approach to therapy, very much related to the latest in brain studies. If you google "Compassion-Focussed Therapy" it will lead you to the websites of this therapy's originators.

Way back in 1998, I wrote an article comparing Theophostic ministry with Traumatic Incident Reduction Therapy (TIR). Another so-called "power therapy" is known as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing). All these therapies originate from a focus on cognitive processes (the relationship between memory, thinking, feeling, and doing), and Compassion-Focussed Therapy, as the latest in this field of study, also incorporates the latest of what neuroscience has to offer.

The training event was very exciting, and also very helpful in explaining what happens to a developing brain in childhood and beyond when trauma is experienced.

Hope that helps.

Judy Cook
Ancaster, Ontario

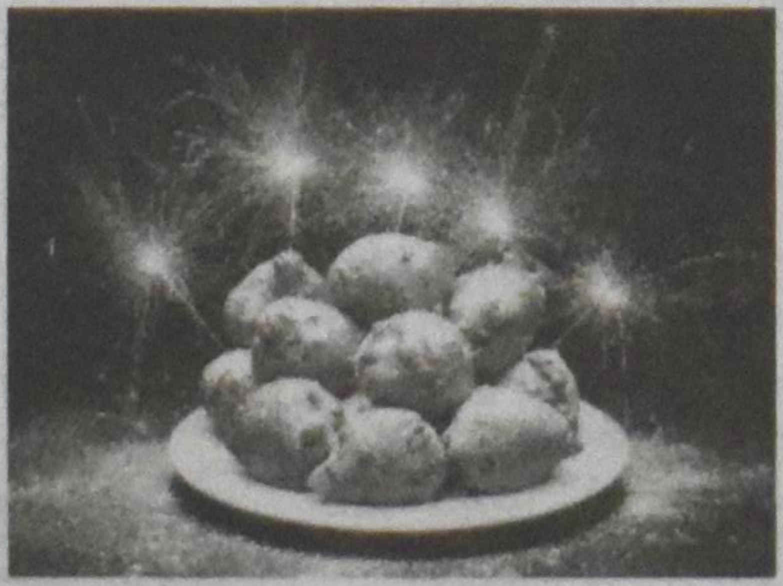
Update on euthanasia bill:

Francine Lalonde is the Bloc MP behind the private member's bill to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada. She introduced the bill last May, and it received its first hour of debate in Parliament on October 2. The second hour of debate, which will end in a vote, has been traded-back by Lalonde from December 1 to February 2, 2010. Lalonde may have foreseen the bill's defeat and wanted extra time to generate support. It's the second time that she has postponed a vote.

This deferal means that you have time to contact your MP and let him or her know your position on bill C-384. The Christian Reformed Church's Office of Disability Concerns has a useful explanation of the bill and its implications at crcna.org/pages/disability_c384. *–eds.*

Dutch Oliebollen

New year's eve doughnuts



- 3 Tbsp yeast
- 2 cups warm water (divided)
- ½ cup white sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 2 cups milk
- 5 cups flour
- raisins or diced apples (optional)

Instructions

In a large bowl, mix yeast, 1 cup warm water, and sugar; stir until dissolved.

Add salt, cinnamon, remaining cup of warm water, milk and flour as well as raisins or apples if you choose.

Cover bowl, and let rise for 1 hour in warm spot until the dough doubles.

Drop scoops of dough in hot oil in a deep-fryer or heavy, deep pan by tablespoonfuls, until brown on both sides (about 8 minutes).

Take out with a slotted spoon to help drain the oil. Olliebollen should be soft and not greasy. If not, your oil is not hot enough. Drain on paper towels.

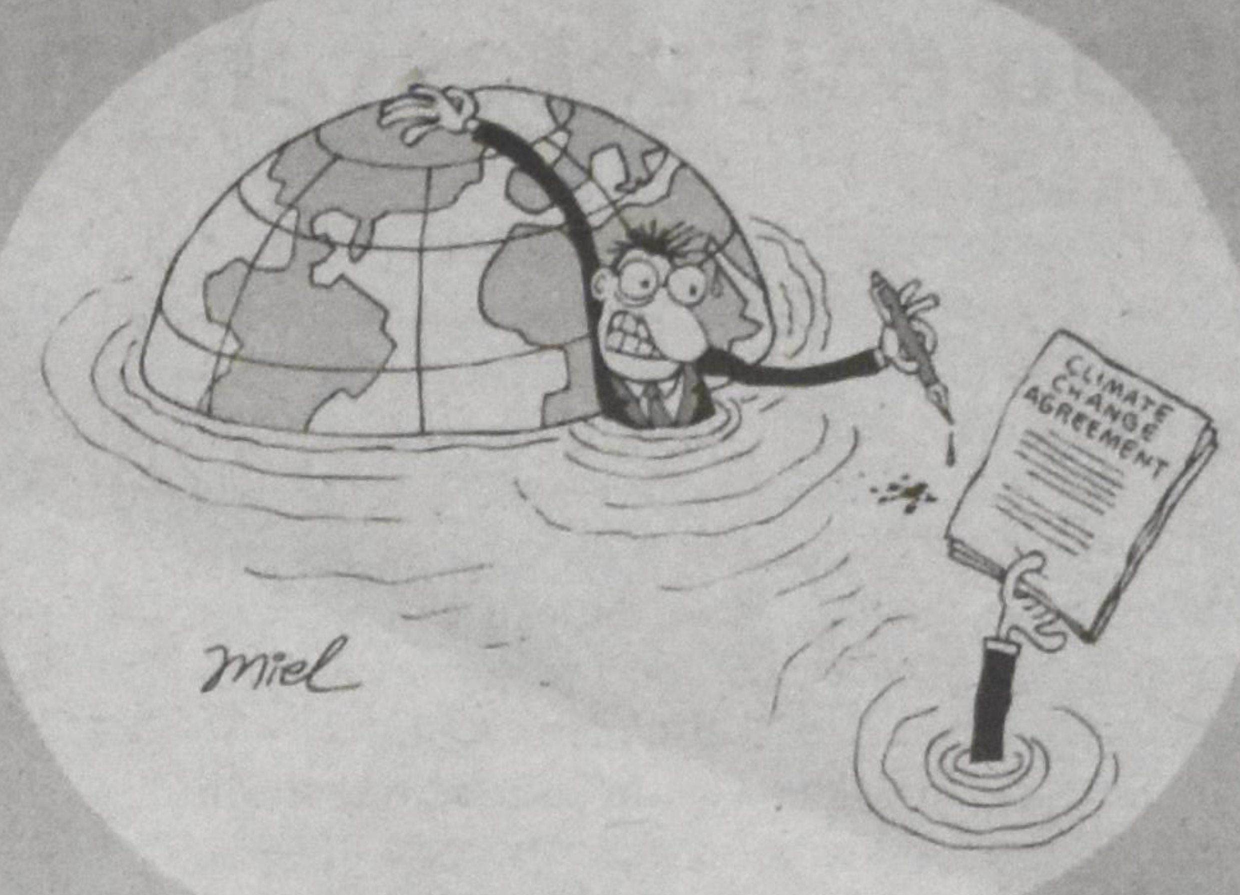
Roll in icing sugar. Eat hot, and enjoy!

– submitted by a reader who misses having recipes in *CC*

What do you think?

This month we ask our readers to elaborate on the following question, "Do you think reports of climate change are exaggerated?

Please send your letters of response to Angela Reitsma Bick via angela@christiancourier.ca



A New Year

I lit a candle yesterday, watching the flame grow stronger
and stronger. It reached a state of happy dance
within the boundaries of its wax home.
The year was ending and wistful thoughts
led me to think less of me and more of others.
My year had been good, not particularly unusual.
I pretty much had a happy dance in the field God has given me.

Yet, others around me had suffered fires in their lives.
Some had died of cancer, flame snuffed out too soon.
Some had been sorely tempted and gone outside of
boundaries God had made for them.
One friend rejected me, a spark I longed to cajole,
yet was no longer given that privilege.
One light in my life moved away leaving me less company.

So there was pain and hurt even while I enjoyed
dancing in the flame of God's goodness,
prancing with my kids and warmed by a husband's love.
Is there any such thing as a common year?
The candle gets lit and relit even as we need to pause,
give glory to our Lord who calls us "the light of the world"
And fan the flame lit by his Spirit in our hearts.

Andrea Dietzman

Christian Courier

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Ethical and theological reflection

Stem cell research in the service of human life?

James J. Rusthoven

VOLOS, GREECE – In early November, 2009, I was privileged to participate in an international consultation on the ethics of stem cell research co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, which is supported by the Greek Orthodox Church. About forty invited participants from various Christian faith traditions came together from thirteen countries on five continents; one Islamic and one Jewish scholar provided insights within their faith traditions as well.

The meeting was organized to address recent relevant scientific developments on the first day, theological reflections on the second day, and legal and social justice issues on the final conference day. On day one, I reviewed the current research into the development of new cellular constructs as possible alternatives to embryonic stem cells, also highlighting several ethical implications. Under laboratory conditions, somatic cells, such as ordinary skin cells, can now be transformed into cells with characteristics of embryonic stem cells with the intention of developing them into new cellular therapies for human diseases. Early techniques required a supply of human eggs that threatened to perpetuate an already thriving trade in which young women sell their eggs.

Newer techniques can create such cells without the need for human eggs, giving these so-called induced pluripotent stem cells the label "the ethical stem cell" by some in the popular press. Before human testing can be considered, however, much work remains to eliminate the need for genetic modification and the use of cancer-associated viruses that plague the more efficient of these techniques. I also challenged those present to consider whether such constructs are truly free of ethical concerns that have surrounded the use of human embryos for research.

Need for caution

Some scientists still believe that human stem cells derived from human embryos are potentially the most promising stem cell sources of new therapies for the widest variety of diseases. However, the much-heralded first clinical trial using cells derived from embryonic stem cells, approved by the Food and Drug Administration in January 2009, was recently halted due to the occurrence of tumours in animals treated with such cells. In the latter portion of my presentation I expressed several broader ethical concerns including the influence of commercial and disease-focused interest groups on regulatory agencies to approve such therapies before safety and efficacy is adequately demonstrated. Another concern is the diversion of resources by such expensive research away from research into improvements in disease prevention and in therapies that would likely benefit many more disease sufferers.

Later in the day, Donald Bruce, representing the Conference of European Churches Bioethics working group, provided further insights into the impact of producing human sperm and eggs from embryonic stem cells for embryo selection and the treatment of infertility. He also alluded to the major controversy in the United Kingdom regarding the creation of chimeras and hybrids for research purposes. These organisms consist of both animal and human elements. During the afternoon, small groups began to wrestle with the Church's response to such research.

On the second day, Fabian Salazar Guerrero from Columbia challenged the growing disparity of research funding allocation to expensive technologies at the expense of prevention and vaccine research in developing countries. Jewish scholar Aviad Raz encouraged greater awareness of this disparity so that we might think more humbly, with greater awareness and accountability, about issues of social justice and equity. Professor Celia Deane-Drummond from the United Kingdom provided a Roman Catholic perspective while Professor Unhey Kim from South Korea added that many genetic diseases may be better treated by altering social and environmental influences rather than therapies developed from stem cell research. On the third day, Jaydee Hanson from a policy assessment group in Washington, D. C. gave an eloquent assessment of the impact of stem cell research at political, social, and environmental levels of society.

Fruitful interaction

During the three days, the spirit of a shared struggle to discern the right moral paths prevailed against a background of diverse views within represented traditions. At times, intense discussions focused on whether it is justifiable to destroy developing human beings for research purposes at any stage of development, even if such action is meant to alleviate the suffering of those with debilitating diseases. In the end, efforts were made to derive wisdom from each tradition in order to enrich the deliberations, judgments, and actions involved in addressing ethical problems of procreative technologies.

Some at the meeting also shared their efforts to develop educational tools for helping church members understand and deal with these new biotechnologies. Particular appreciation was offered to those who shared their personal struggles over whether or not to use *in vitro* fertilization and other procreative technologies, given their ethical consequences. No consensus statement was attempted. Rather, participants took home a richer understanding of these complex issues through honest and sometimes personally painful dialogue, pledging to pass on this learning to those in their respective faith traditions.

Dr. Rusthoven is a part-time medical oncologist (cancer therapist) while working on a PhD dissertation in bioethics and theology. He also chairs the Biotechnology Reference Group of the Canadian Council of Churches, having an interest in helping to educate church-going folk understand biotechnology and its implications. Jim particularly enjoys bird-watching, jogging and cycling.

Going to the dark side

From the Lab
Rudy Eikelboom

In the Old Testament, some of God's people were assigned the office of prophet, priest, or king. In the New Testament, we recognize that Christ fulfils all three offices on our behalf. At the same time, when we look around at the responsibilities we have in this complex post-Christian society, it might be useful to think about how the Old Testament offices apply. I've been thinking lately about the two offices, prophet and king, and how they relate to my various tasks as a university professor.

University professors do more than simply teach. On average, professors are expected to spend 40 percent of their time teaching, 40 percent doing research, and the last 20 percent in administrative tasks. I love my teaching and research; my wife opines that she will have to force me to retire and pull me from my job kicking and screaming. I think she may be right. It is truly a gift from our Lord when we love our work; not everyone is so blessed. One way to think of my responsibilities of teaching and research is that they fit into the prophetic office, speaking and learning about God's general revelation. As a research scientist, I seek to understand God's creation as an aspect of God's word. As a teacher, I pass on my understanding of God's revelation to others, the prophetic task of "speaking the words of the Lord."

The dark side?

In contrast, the administrative tasks professors fulfil, particularly those with relatively high responsibility and demands, seem analogous to the kingly office. One key administrative position is department chair. These individuals are usually elected by their peers to serve a several-year term as administrative leader (the first among equals) of the department. In my experience, this position is one that very few professors want to assume, because they prefer teaching and are drawn by the open-ended potential of their research. Administration with its pragmatic choices and issues seems foreign to our thinking; it is often viewed as the dark side. People usually have to have their arms twisted to take on these responsibilities.

My arm has now been twisted. I was elected chair of our psychology department last July and, thus, for the next number of years, I will be both the servant and leader of those who form the psychology department at Wilfrid Laurier University. For me this marks a transition to a kingly office with different responsibilities, challenges and maybe honours.

All-consuming task

The first year or two in this position are seen as a learning curve for the incumbent. Six months into the position, I can see that there are many details to learn: the details of promotion and hiring, how to give people work, trying to solve conflicts before they become bigger problems. The assignment of courses to instructors and timetable issues are big on my plate right now. I find that administrative issues are with me all day, every day, more so than was the case with my teaching (at least at this stage in my career). Research, being a creative exercise, comes and goes in a manner I do not understand and, at times, can be all-consuming. Administrative tasks, however, have tight deadlines, making them take priority over other issues, even research.

Psychology is one of Laurier's larger departments. We have 33 tenured or tenure-track (permanent positions) professors in psychology, over 80 graduate students and accept 1800 students into our first-year course. With these numbers administration becomes a challenge, and so I am not required to teach. In theory, this means that I spend 60 percent of my time in administration, leaving 40 percent for research. Previous chairs have told me that the administrative tasks will consume all my time and more. After six months into this position I can see that this is true.

Thinking about being chair as a kingly office puts a different context to the position. It is not going to the dark side but it is an honourable position which fills a necessary need. There are challenges for kings to work within the framework God has established for this office. For example, Saul is charged with delivering his people from their enemies. Am I thus charged with protecting psychology's interests in the university? I need to think more about this, and, for now, teaching will have to wait. The trick for me will be to maintain my research in some manner.

Ask me next year around this time how I succeeded at being a servant-king.

Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.

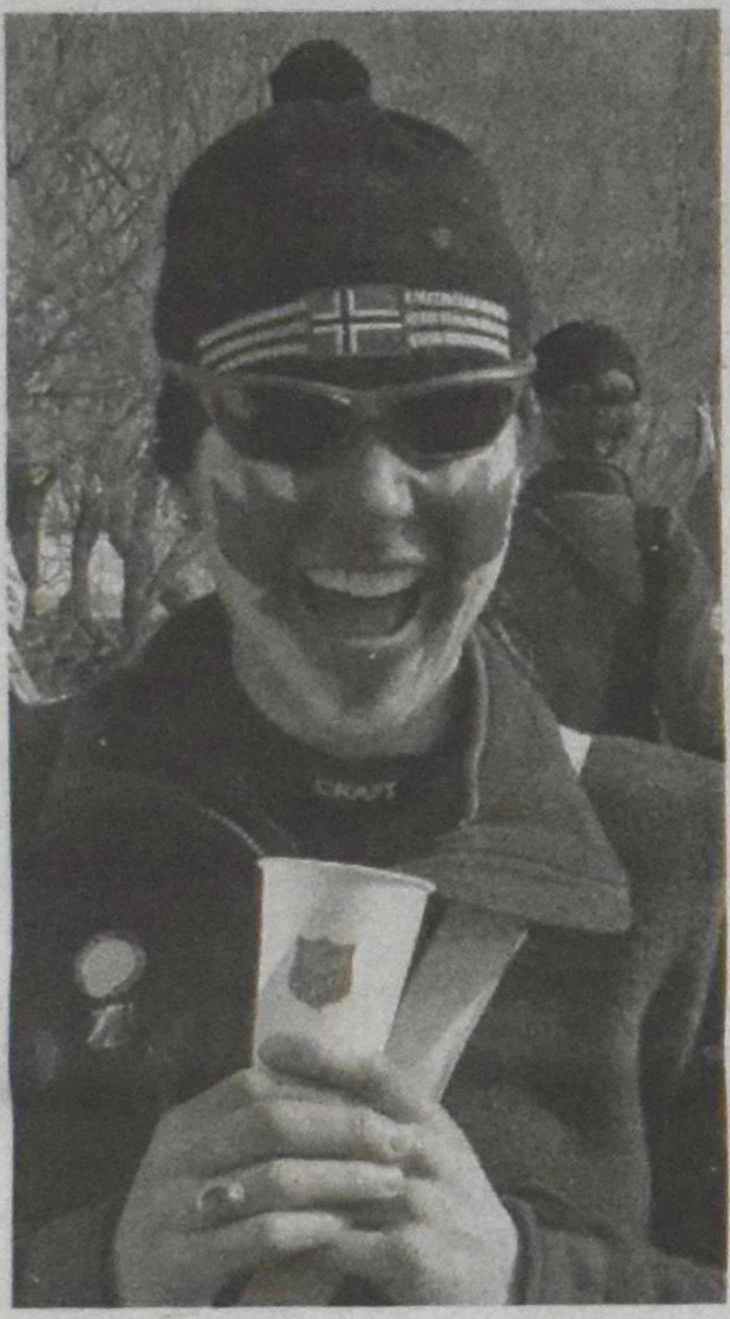
News

Hero-worship or harmless fun?

The redeeming potential of sport
Part I in an Olympic series

Chris Steenhof

Ever since Vancouver was awarded the 2010 Winter Olympic Games on July 2, 2003, excitement and energy have been building in British Columbia and in the country as a whole. For sports fans, it seems like a once-in-a lifetime opportunity: the chance to watch some of best athletes compete at the most illustrious athletic competition in history. Others are more excited about the economic, cultural, or even political possibilities that surround such a large-scale international event. At the same time, a diverse and often vocal group of dissenters have expressed a variety of concerns surrounding issues such as the displacement of the poor and the elimination of affordable housing. -



Salvation Army volunteer prepares for the Olympics.

For most Canadians, it's difficult to make sense of this peculiar mixture of anger and excitement, but perhaps the issue is even more complex for the Christian. How can we find our way through the midst of a culture that seems mesmerized by athletes and competition in general? What should our response be when the world stops turning for 17 days in February?

Perhaps it's important to take a step backward and consider a larger issue: Is there something redeemable about athletics, or is it an area of culture that has been so distorted that we should avoid it? With the Olympics approaching, it's a fitting time to evaluate the place of sports in our culture, and find a middle ground where Christians can enjoy the gift of sports while not sacrificing to the god of hero worship or sharing our culture's obsession with physical fitness.

The place of sports in our culture

A statistical analysis of the place of sports in our world is eye opening. What does it say about our culture when a professional team such as the Toronto Maple Leafs was valued at $470 million in 2008? Or that in the same year, Tiger Woods, a professional golfer, made over $114 million, mostly through commercial endorsements? It is also clear that sports play a pivotal role in forming the character of our youth.

For faith communities, the reality is strikingly similar. Try scheduling a church or school meeting during an NHL playoff game or observe the dramatic drop in church attendance on Grey Cup Sunday and you'll understand that sports is as important to the Christian world as it is to the larger culture.

Sports as a creational good

But where should sports fit into the life of a Christian? One way to think of athletics is to consider it as part of the cultural mandate – that in essence, like other areas of culture, sports in its rightful place should be embraced by Christians. The apostle Paul himself uses many sports analogies in his letters. Numerous times he likens the Christian walk to a race or a battle, urging Christians to "run the good race".

Even the enjoyment we feel when watching sports is something to be affirmed. Christians can fall into the trap of seeing spheres such as sports and recreation as "a waste of time and money". But creation itself affirms the goodness of recreation and rest, and watching sports (as long as you can stop yourself from screaming at the television set) can meet the requirements of this creational command.

Recognizing that sports are a gift from God can stop us from falling into the dangerous trap of secularism – the removal of God from certain areas of life. Instead, we can affirm a God who cares deeply about his creation, and who calls us to make him Lord of all, including the God of how and why we participate in athletic endeavours.

With the Olympics fast approaching, this is a fitting time for the Christian community to recognize that sports as a concept is a God-given gift and that it's an important part of our mandate to better understand its place in society. It's only then that maybe we can find that elusive middle ground between throwing ourselves thoughtlessly at the gods of hero worship and adulation and rejecting a morally acceptable pursuit that brings joy and fulfillment to many.

Chris Steenhof is a teacher in British Columbia. Check out the January 11 issue of CC for a closer look at a Christian response to the Olympics.

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

A good year, relatively speaking

Throughout the summer of 2009 A.D. Canadians heard reports of unseasonable weathers, unusual patterns, drought here, floods there, but mostly *cool and cloudy*. I suppose you could call it rather a flop as a summer.

In Central B.C. we had a long stretch of dry, warm weather (as close as we get to really hot). That pleased the beach crowd who were able to sport bikinis without a backup set of thermal underwear in the beach bag. I suppose – though I have no statistics – that tourism may have been up.

Farmers, however, may have had a different take on the summer. In this area, forages are the main crop. Hay and silage, hay and haylage, hay and pasture – these are the things that farmers talk about when they discuss farming. (They used to discuss beef prices, but that's about as depressing these days as discussing septic tank blockages.)

Winter barrens (L) and winter paradise (R).

For forage crops, it wasn't the best summer. Crops yielded only 60-70 percent of normal. It was a good thing that some farmers had a holdover hay supply from last year to offset some of the decrease.

In this area of the country we like a heavy snow pack because the melting snow has to keep the ground moist through April at least. In May and June we need rain. Our area is actually very dry with annual precipitation measuring only about 325mm/13 inches. We count on snow melt lasting at least until the end of April.

In 2009 we had a warm and dry spring, followed by a hot and dry spring. We had fertilizer prices that were atmospheric, causing farmers to reduce or eliminate nitrogen purchases. New seeding of barley/peas or oats for haylage struggled to germinate and then grew into a thin crop. Undersown alfalfa seed germinated but withered once the cover crop was removed.

True, those people who had new seeding from 2008 and the best land, and who harvested in July, were rewarded with an acceptable crop of "beef hay."

But overall, for farmers, 2009 was not the best year.

Things were so grim that some fields were just abandoned for the year. Landowners looking for someone to harvest their land on shares sometimes went without a customer.

Not the best year.

However . . .

For creatures other than human beings, cows, horses, and sheep, however, the summer was pretty good.

To round nesting birds like savannah sparrows and certain ducks (mallards, teal, shovelers), abandoned fields represent a secure nursery. No swathers or rotary mowers to remove their cover and expose nests to crows and ravens. No mowers to shred mothers and leave half-hatched eggs left still-born.

The uncut hayfield is also heaven for voles and other rodents. Reproducing without any self-control whatsoever, rodent populations sky-rocketed. Crows, ravens, harriers, foxes, coyotes, red-tailed hawks, owls and weasels all found a steady supply of food. Actually, they gorged themselves.

With autumn, the uncut fields of grass provided snow-catching cover, safe subterranean tunnelling territory, and the possibility of rodent-produced haystacks all winter long.

High song-bird survival rates meant a larger population travelling south, and – barring the unforeseen – travelling north again in 2010.

More fur-bearing predators would be available for trappers; more visual sightings of foxes, coyotes, marten, weasel, mink would satisfy the human watchers.

For many types of wildlife, not the worst year. In fact, the year of our Lord 2009 may stand out in our area as a pretty good year, relatively speaking.

Curt Gesch is a retired teacher who has a root cellar, a garden chalet, and a really old house in Quick, B.C.

Church

Conservative vs. liberal Anglicans in Canada: A case study in clashing worldviews

Marian Van Til, with files from canadianchristianity.com and ANiC

NEW WESTMINSTER, B.C. – Last month Justice Stephen Kelleher of the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster has the right to retain the property of four parishes which left the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC) to join the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC).

In 2008 most of the members in the four parishes named in the lawsuit voted to leave their diocese in Canada's theologically liberal mainline Anglican Church. For six years prior to that they had been in what the ANiC terms "serious theological dispute" with their diocese. In 2002 the diocese voted to bless to same-sex unions, and moved toward accepting gay clergy. But a reworking of "the doctrine of Christian marriage" wasn't the only or most fundamental sticking point. At heart, says the ANiC, the issues of contention rest on the Anglican Church's redefinition of "the authority and inerrancy of Scripture and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ."

Jim Coggins, associate editor of canadianchristianity.com, says on that website that Justice Kelleher's decision has brought some clarity but has not resolved all issues in the dispute. Kelleher asserted that he based his 98-page decision on "neutral principles of law." He ruled that courts should not become involved in church doctrinal disputes but should decide church property issues based on a church's own "statutes and rules."

No authority to leave a diocese?

Coggins explains that the four parishes were separately incorporated and each held title to its own church property. However, the parishes were incorporated under the same legal act which incorporated the New Westminster diocese. Kelleher saw that as sufficient grounds to rule that "a parish does not have authority to unilaterally leave the Diocese" and "property effectively remains within the Diocese."

Coggins points out that "the four parishes argued that the case should instead have been decided on trust law – the idea that the properties were donated and held in trust for 'historic, orthodox Anglican doctrine and practice' as defined in the 'Solemn Declaration' issued by the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC) when it was founded."

Kelleher, however, said that even if he had ruled based on trust law the church properties would still remain with the diocese. Though the Anglican Church issued the "Solemn Declaration," the church was not founded on it, he argued. He also insisted that it is impossible to determine what is historic orthodox Anglican doctrine and what isn't, since Anglican doctrine has changed on issues such as allowing divorced people to remarry and on ordaining women.

Kelleher wrote that the courts should defer to the "highest ecclesial authority" to decide what is considered to be orthodox doctrine. In this case, he said, that is the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Predictably, the Anglican Network in Canada was not impressed by the logic of Kelleher's arguments. ANiC's legal advisor Cheryl Chang said, "It is a great concern to hear that a majority can redefine and change the doctrine of the church and that those who wish to remain faithful to the church's teaching must change their beliefs or sacrifice their buildings. The Bible is not changeable by democratic vote." Chang said that Kelleher's decision misunderstands Christian doctrine.

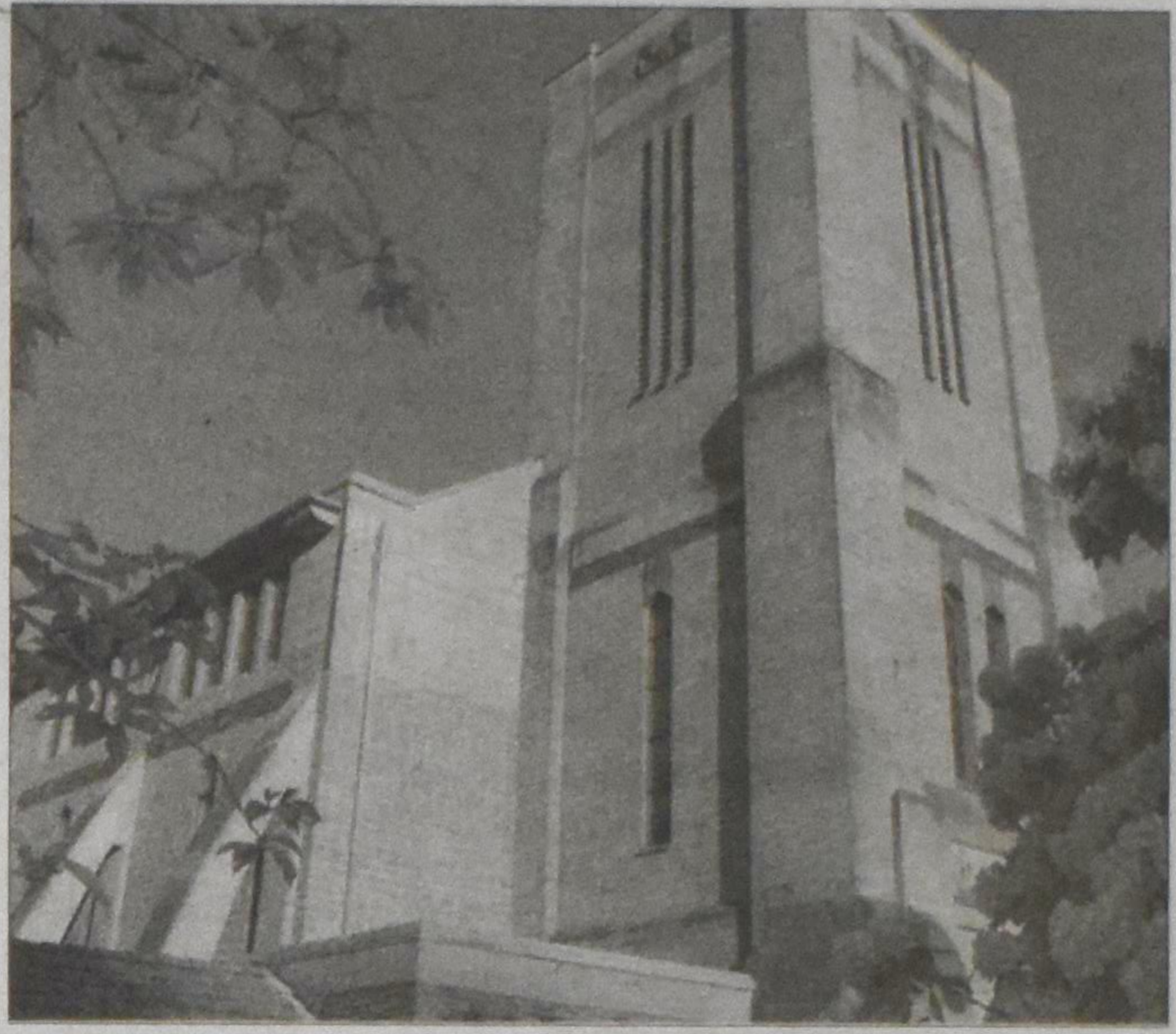
Not entirely clear

Chancellor of the Diocese of New Westminster George Cadman lauded the court decision for providing "clarity going forward." But clarity is sometimes in the eye of the beholder. The parishes were given 30 days to decide whether to appeal the decision. Those 30 days will be up as this issue of *CC* appears. "An appeal could delay a final decision for years," Jim Coggins notes.

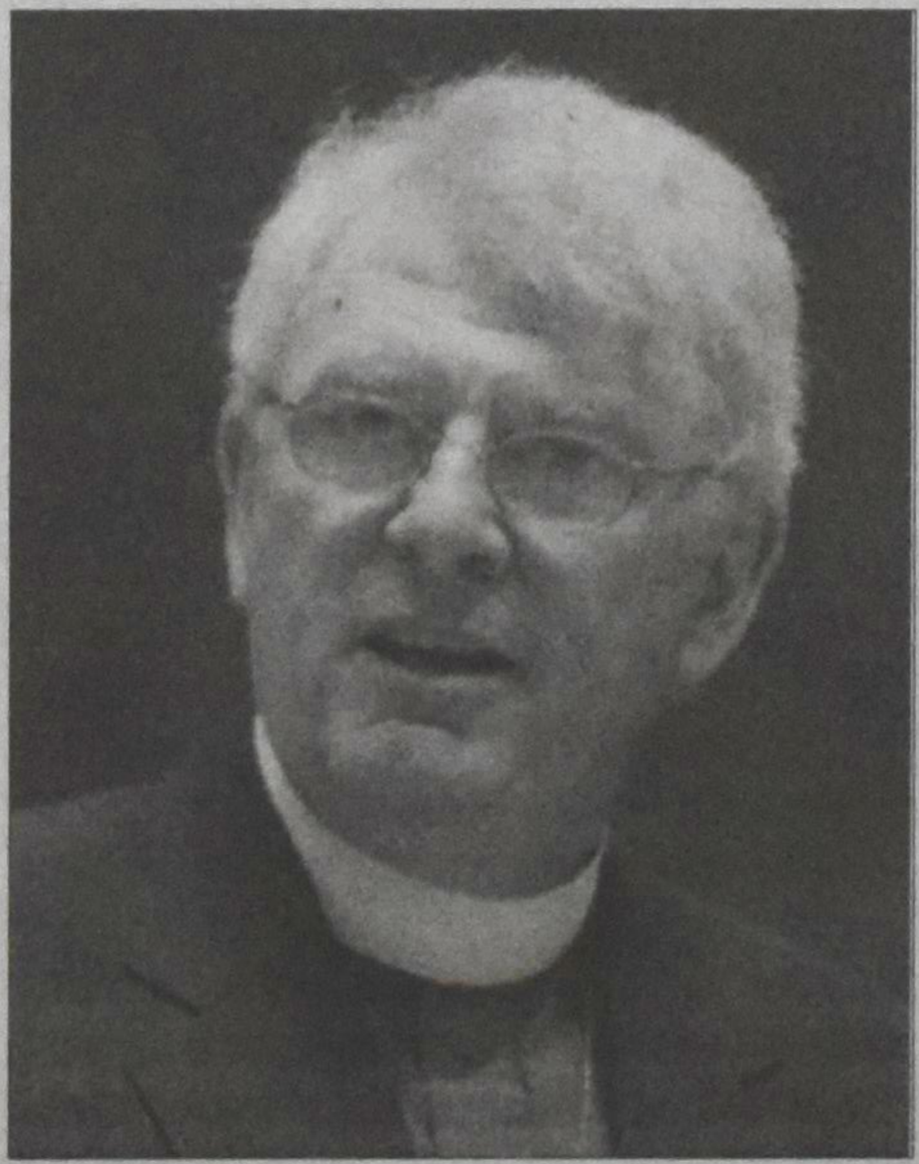
An issue that could affect an appeal is the ongoing re-structuring of the worldwide Anglican Communion, says Coggins. The Anglican Church in Canada is one of 38 provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion. "Kelleher based his decision, in part, on the fact that the ACoC is the only Anglican province in Canada recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury," the head of that Communion.

The ANiC has become a diocese in the new Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) and is affiliated with the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, one of the conservative provinces that make up the 38 jurisdictions of the Anglican Communion. The ANiC is also a part of the global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

The recently formed ACNA hopes to become its own province in the Anglican Communion rather than exist under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church in Canada. The ANiC has a weekly church attendance of about 3,500 members, making it larger than 13 existing dioceses within the ACoC. In all, the conservative Anglican Church in North America already has some 100,000 members in 28 dioceses in the U.S. and Canada – the majority of which members left the existing ACoC and The Episcopal Church in the U.S.



The disputed St. John's Shaughnessey building.



Bishop Michael Ingham

George Cadman of the New Westminster diocese and diocesan bishop Michael Ingham both scoff at the idea that the ACNA would be accepted as a province in the Anglican Communion. "Highly remote," said Cadman; "Pure fantasy," said Ingham. That reaction flies in the face of the fact that the ACNA has already been recognized by a number of provinces in the global south, provinces which together represent the majority of Anglicans worldwide.

Downside for mainstream Anglicans

Kelleher did not rule exclusively in favour of the Diocese of New Westminster. He concluded that Ingham had no right to replace the four churches' parish trustees (elected by church members to administer church property). It was Ingham's attempt to do that that caused the parishes to bring the court case in the first place.

The decision also left an odd juxtaposition of mainstream Anglicans and the dissenters. The theologically liberal diocese owns the four church buildings but those buildings are still being administered by the theologically conservative parish trustees. Kelleher ruled, perhaps unrealistically, that the parties involved should "arrive at a workable resolution."

However, New Westminster diocesan leaders insist that the issue has already been decided. Bishop Ingham contends that "the entire conflict has been unnecessary." He blames it on a few "extreme conservative leaders," notes Coggins. Ingham has written to the parishes inviting them to remain in the buildings and work with him to appoint new conservative clergy acceptable to both him and the parishes.

Will choose faith over buildings

That is not likely to happen, says the ANiC's Chang. The people in the parishes who voted by strong margins to leave the diocese "knew we could lose our property…. At the end of the day, if forced to choose, we will choose our faith over our buildings."

At stake is not just the buildings, Jim Coggins notes, "but also the parish bank accounts and other property, down to the hymn books in the pews. However, since the dispute began – and after an attempt by the diocese to take control of the bank accounts – some of the parishes have been operating out of separate bank accounts held in the name of the ANiC."

Coggins points out that "the least affected of the four parishes is Church of the Good Shepherd in Vancouver, the largest Chinese Anglican parish in Canada." It had outgrown its Anglican building anyway so the congregation recently bought a larger building on which the diocese has no claim. Justice Kelleher also ruled that a $2.2 million bequest to the Good Shepherd congregation's building fund belongs to the congregation and not to the diocese.

Coggins reports that St. Matthew's Church in Abbotsford, B.C., "has been offered space in the building of a church belonging to another denomination if it chooses to surrender its building." Coggins notes that "the situation will be more difficult for the other two churches in expensive west Vancouver: St. John's Shaughnessy and St Matthias / St. Luke's."

St. John's Shaughnessy is the largest Anglican Church in Canada, attracting 800 worshippers on Sunday mornings and additional people to its mid-week programs. Its building is worth $10 million. Chang, who is a member there, says it will be nearly impossible to find another building in the same neighborhood to accommodate that many people. "This is an attack on our ability to preach the gospel," she asserted.

Setting a precedent

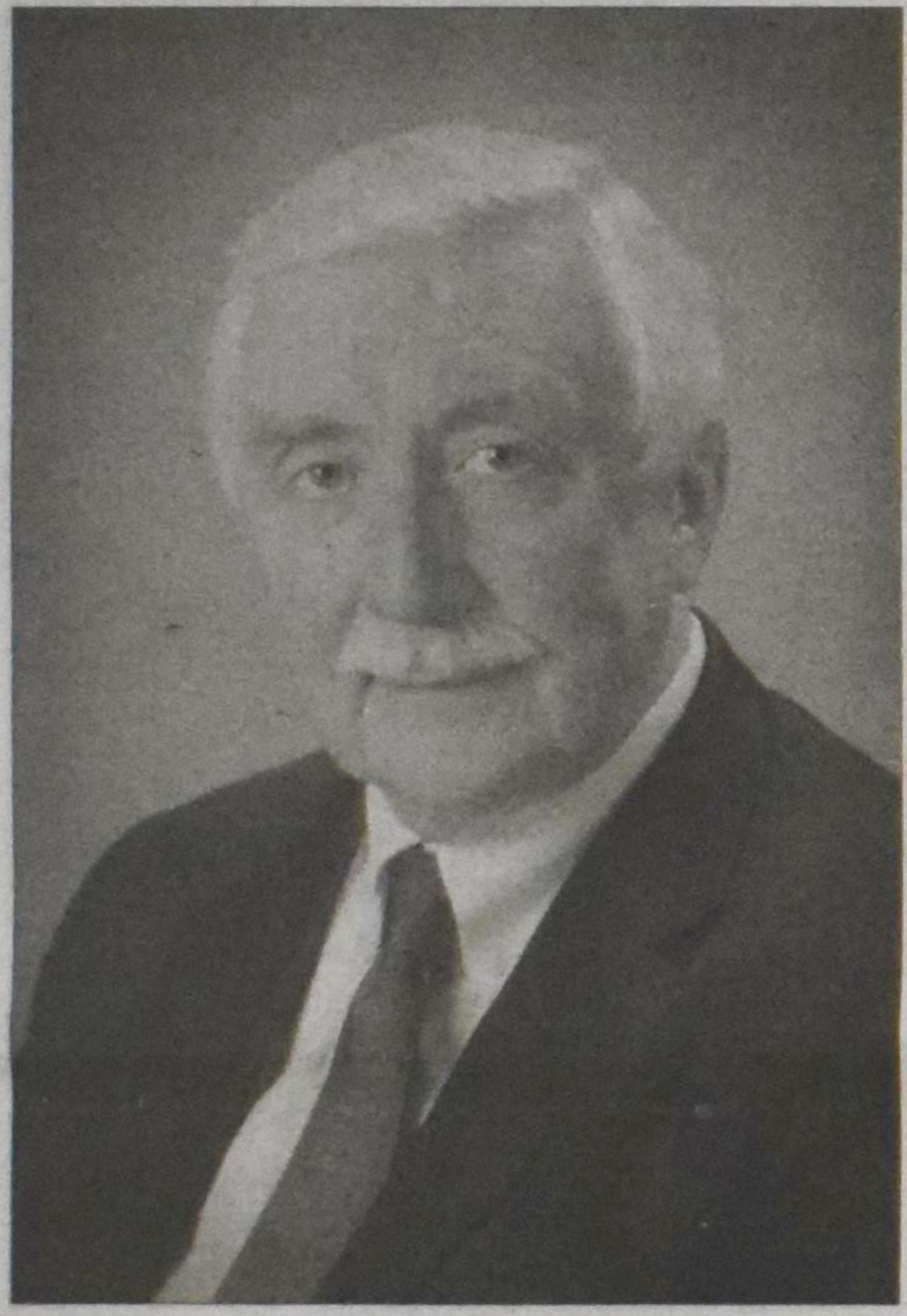
This court case will set a precedent for pending cases involving other parishes that

See **Parishes** *on page 9*

Study reveals pornography to be 'a quiet family killer'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (CNA) – A new study on the effects of pornography indicates that it erodes the family, corrupts men's sense of normal sexuality and is a major factor in divorces. The author of the study characterized pornography as "a quiet family killer."

The study, titled "The Effects of Pornography on Individuals, Marriage, Family and Community," was authored by Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D, who is a trained psychologist and a former U.S. Deputy Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary. He is also director of the Center for Research on Marriage and Religion at the Family Research Council (FRC), which produced the study.



Dr. Patrick F. Fagan.

The study reports that men who regularly view pornography have a higher tolerance for abnormal sexuality, including rape, sexual aggression and sexual promiscuity.

Married men involved in pornography report feeling less satisfied with their marital relations and less emotionally attached to their wives, the study says. It also notes that men who regularly use pornography or women who engage in "cybersex" show increased infidelity.

Triples infidelity rate

Researcher Steven Stack of Wayne State University led a study which indicated pornography use more than triples the rate of marital infidelity.

The FRC study says pornography users "increasingly see the institution of marriage as sexually confining, have diminished belief in the importance of marital faithfulness, have increasing doubts about the value of marriage as an essential social institution, and further doubts about its future viability. "All this naturally diminishes the importance for them of having good family relations in their own families."

According to the study, a survey of divorce lawyers found that 68 per cent of divorce cases involved one party meeting a new paramour over the internet while 56 per cent involved one party having an "obsessive interest" in pornographic websites.

Pornography encourages greater sexual permissiveness, leading to a greater risk of out-of-wedlock births and sexually transmitted diseases, the study says. Severe clinical depression was also reported twice as frequently among internet pornography users compared to non-users.

Devastating impact on adolescents

Pornography on the internet also has major affects on adolescents. A reported 70 percent of youth aged 15-17 have come across pornography accidentally while online. The youth did not disclose such incidents to anyone almost half the time. Those who accidentally encountered such images were more than 2.5 times more likely to intentionally seek it out than those never exposed. While adolescents initially experience shame, embarrassment and disgust at pornography, these feelings recede with repeated exposure.

Teens are more likely to view pornography if they have high levels of computer use, fast internet connections, personal dissatisfaction, younger friends or a sensation-seeking personality. Adolescents who watch the most explicit sexual content available on television doubled the likelihood that they would initiate sexual intercourse, an action with long-lasting consequences. Studies indicate that marital stability in later life decreases as the number of pre-marital sexual partners increases.

Dr. Fagan discussed the study in an FRC statement announcing its release. "This is a ground-breaking review of what pornography costs families trying to create a life together. Men, women and sometimes even children are saturated by sexual content, and more significantly, are told that it has no real effect. It's just a little amusement," Fagan said.

Corrodes the conscience

"Pornography corrodes the conscience, promotes distrust between husbands and wives and debases untold thousands of young women. It is not harmless escapism but relational and emotional poison."

Fagan said that although the steady drop in marriage rates is well known, the impact of pornography on marriage has been little discussed. "The data show that as pornography sales increase, the marriage rate drops," he reported.

The decline in the family especially affects children without married parents. These children have much higher poverty rates, poorer health and other socio-economic problems. And underlying the social trends is the impact of pornography on family formation. "It's a quiet family killer," Fagan wrote.

Parishes *from page 8*

have left the ACoC – and no doubt for dissenters in other mainline dominations as well, such as Presbyterians and Lutherans, who are facing the same kinds of issues.

ANiC has 30 parishes and there are additional conservative parishes in other ACNA dioceses. Chang says there are also other conservative parishes in the ACoC which may want to leave in future. ACoC leaders are "forcing people to stay in the church out of fear" they will lose their buildings, she says.

For some years, the ACoC and The Episcopal Church in the U.S. have been losing members, and recent studies in Canada confirm significant declines in attendance and finances in the ACoC as a whole and in the Diocese of New Westminster. Quite apart from the conservative parishes which have left and are leaving, the denomination already has a surplus of buildings.

Yet both Cadmon and Ingham refused to say whether their diocese would be willing to sell now unused buildings to ANiC congregations. They may take their cue from their American counterparts who are refusing to sell empty church buildings to conservative parishes that have left that denomination.

CRC releases downloadable study on Lord's Supper

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – The Faith Formation Committee for the Christian Reformed Church has created and posted a downloadable Bible study that offers church members a chance to view what the Bible says about celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Special focus is placed on 1 Corinthians 11, although other relevant passages are cited. In the 1 Corinthians chapter Paul writes about the Lord's Supper and describes the setting of and words spoken when Jesus instituted the sacrament.

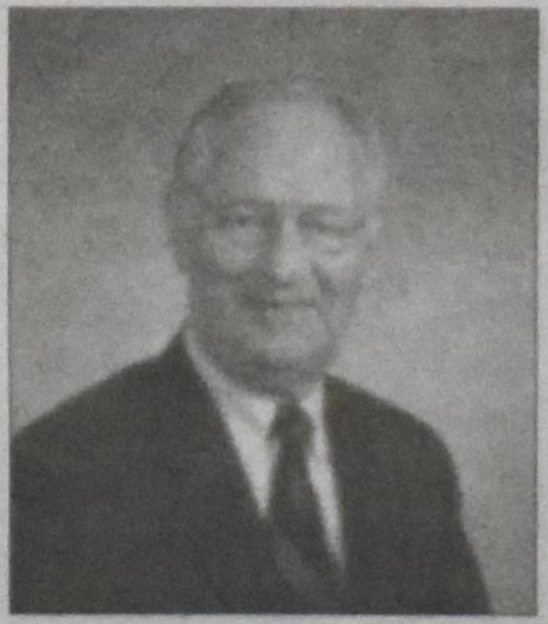
"Our concern with the 1 Corinthians 11 … is that it's a key passage on the actions of the church at the Lord's Supper and will undoubtedly figure prominently in discussions ahead," says Howard Vanderwell, secretary of the Faith Formation Committee and an adjunct professor of worship at Calvin Seminary.

"We're also concerned that there are some misconceptions that people bring to their consideration of this chapter, and we hope that the church will begin rethinking some of those misconceptions through such studies," says Vanderwell.

Aiming to strengthen participation

According to the study's introduction, its main goal "is to strengthen your congregation's participation in the Lord's Supper. Part of the blessing of Communion is regular, frequent observance, but the frequency may also serve to diminish the wondrous mystery of the sacrament."

It continues, "The issues are complex and are further complicated by the wonderfully deep emotional freight that the sacrament carries. It is our prayer and hope that these Bible studies will make space for gentle reflection on this important matter."



Rev. Howard Vanderwell.

Established by Synod 2007, the Faith Formation Committee was given five years to study the biblical teaching, confessional norms, church polity and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC with respect to participation in the Lord's Supper and public profession of faith.

The committee will report its findings and recommendations to Synod 2012. Among other things, its goal is to formulate "a clear statement about the participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the practice of public profession of faith for use in the churches," says the committee's website (www.crcna.org/pages/ffc_front.cfm). The new Bible study is available on this site.

Titled "A Practice of Christian Unity," the 17-page Bible study is organized into five sections: This is Church; "And When Your Children Ask You …" (The Passover and the Lord's Supper); Celebrating the Lord's Supper in the CRC; Joyfully Obeying Paul's Instructions, Part 1 and Part 2.

"We do not plan more of these as Bible Studies, but we are writing other documents for the church to study, such as those already on the website ('Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith' and 'Children at the Table')," says Vanderwell. "We'd really like the 1 Corinthians 11 studies to be used as widely as possible."

Forgiveness

My talk with Moses

Carl Tuyl

Come with me on a swift trans-atlantic journey to the town where I was born: The Hague. In the inner city there used to be a thriving Jewish section. I remember it well. My father bought shoes for me there, haggling to get the price lowered by a dime or so. It was a bustling part of town, with all kinds of shops, kosher butchers, second-hand clothing stores, and a beautiful synagogue. Jewish men walked around with their colourful hats and their prayer shawls peeping out from under their jackets. On Saturdays the place would go silent, the shops closed. People would worship and visit. But no sooner would the sun have set then life again would resume its usual exuberance.

It's all gone. Yes, it still is a vibrant down-town part of the city, with large stores, boutiques and galleries. People are still parading through the narrow streets, speaking all kinds of different languages. But nothing Jewish is left. Little Maurice, who was in my class and who should by this time be about my age, was gassed in who knows which hellish concentration camp. None of the Jews who lived there survived, except for a precious few who escaped the onslaught of the blond German brutes, who mercilessly killed anyone who did not meet the requirement of Aryan purity.

I remembered

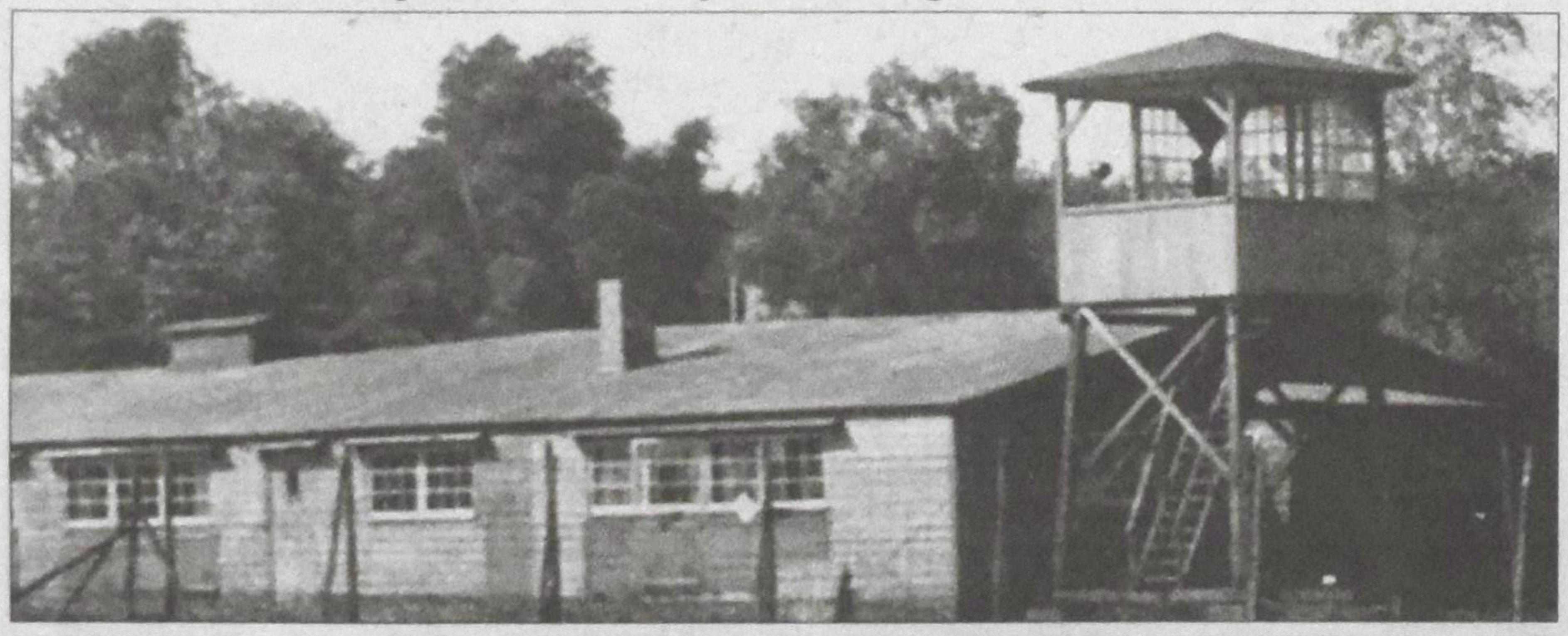
I wandered around there again this past September. In a small busy street against the back wall of a large department store stands a monument that mentions a verse from the twenty-fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, the farewell words of Moses: "Remember what Amalek did to you." When I am in Holland I always visit that place. I stand in front of that monument and spend some time just letting my thoughts go and do what Moses told the people of Israel to do: remember.

Memory is sadistic – it lets you forget things you want to keep in your mind, and sometimes it paints with cruel clarity in your thinking things, places and events you would much rather forget. It has riveted into my mind images that I cannot rid of. I stood there in front of that black iron-wrought monument, and memory had its way with me. The sound of traffic, the noise of hordes of people passing by, the sight of what happened around me – it all vanished out of my consciousness. In a zombie-like state of mind I did what Moses demanded of his people: remember.

When I did that, there arose out of a misty cloud of oblivion the figure of the notary my father worked for. He was rich, and he had many possessions. He was Jewish. My father, who foresaw what was to happen to Jewish people, had arranged for a fisher's boat to allow this man and his family to flee to England. But he refused to go. He thought that his money and his possessions would be able to safeguard him. We don't know in which portal of hell he and his family were gassed but none of them returned.

Camp memories

And then I saw again this man who is a rather steady guest in my memory. I can't say that he is welcome, but he refuses to leave for good. He makes these occasional visits to my mind. He shows up sometimes unexpectedly when I can't sleep at night. And when I stood there in front of that monument, I knew that he would enter my memory again. And there he was: Inmate Such and Such (I forgot the number) in the Amersfoort concentration camp. Like all of us, he was dressed in rags, and he was walking on wooden shoes. He wore a beard, because Jewish prisoners were forbidden to shave. One of the S.S. guards lit his beard with a match. The guard did not allow him to extinguish the flames with his hand. His face was red with blood when the fire had burned his beard. He did not speak, and he did not moan, but we all knew his pain. And we all knew that this was the man's last day. Once the guards focussed on one of the Jewish prisoners, they would not quit torturing the man until he died. This man of whom I speak died late in the afternoon from repeated brutal beatings. In one way he was an exception. His body was not wheeled onto the parade ground to be included in the count that evening. An S.S. man had opened the lid of one the big sewage tanks of the camp and had thrown the body in there, as if he was disposing of a piece of garbage. I heard the sound of the lid of the tank when he put it back.



Amersfoort concentration camp.

The Rose Garden

When I stood there in that busy street staring at the words of Moses in black iron fastened against this wall, it was as if his admonition not to forget was spoken to me. Yet I did object, as I have done in vain many a time: "Moses, I would rather forget. You know, Moses, they – the Germans – were not Amalekites. Yes, indeed, they did the same brutal things to God's people, but I don't like to remember it all."

But as I was objecting to Moses, oblivious to my surroundings, a never-forgotten scene invaded my mind again. I saw it again, and I was standing there again. It was the Rose Garden. I don't know how that place got its name. It was a space set off with barbed wire across from the parade ground. In that place the prisoners stood sometimes for hours. They stood to be counted and then to be counted again and again.

Standing in the Rose Garden was punishment for minor infractions, such as not taking off your cap when an S.S. officer went by, or not walking fast enough with the wooden basket with which we carried sand and stones from one end of the camp to the other for whatever unknown purpose. Even though the infraction might have been minor, standing in the Rose Garden was no picnic. You were not supposed to move any part of your body, and you would stand there for hours, sometimes for a 24-hour stretch, in rain or sunshine, cold or heat. I have visited what is left of the camp in Amersfoort. It is now a museum. And, yes, the Rose Garden is still there. Only now it is a real rose garden. Roses there now spread their wonderful perfume where before there was only the stifling scent of despair. Beautiful roses bloom at the very same spot where I have seen men collapse from exhaustion.

A short sermon

Another picture entered my mind: a church service. At least, I still think of it as a church service. There was no minister, no pulpit, no collection, no Bibles – nothing like that. It involved no more than six or seven people, huddled in a far dark corner of the barrack, late one Sunday evening. Although it was attendance by invitation only, I don't know why I was invited. An elderly gentleman prayed and then asked us to recite any Bible verse that we remembered. I don't remember the verses that were recited, I only remember the few words that I contributed from my very limited Bible knowledge. I said, "De Heer is mijn herder." The Lord is my shepherd. That was for sure the shortest sermon I ever preached. But it was also a service I will never forget.

There were many more images that made their appearance that afternoon. I don't think I stood there in that street any longer than five minutes. But just like what often happens during that one-minute silence on Remembrance Day, my mind was flooded with memories that refuse to leave me. And I understand Moses. Don't forget what they did to you. Don't forget the Amalekites. They always attacked the weak – the women and children who could not keep up with the tempo of the marching Israelites. Reading that passage, I thought about my brother-in-law who, when the Russians approached on the Eastern front, was marched with thousands of other prisoners to the West. No food, no drink, bitter cold, always marching westward for days on end. It is known in the annals of that miserable history as "the death march." The Germans did exactly to those prisoners what the Amalekites did to the people of Israel. Whoever could not keep up with the march, whoever collapsed on the side of the road, would be killed with a single shot to the head. My brother-in-law miraculously survived. He came home on a stretcher on Pentecost Day of the year 1945. But his life was never normal again, and he died rather young.

Anticipating the future

Yes I understand, Moses. It is not something that you can shrug off like the memory of some incident of bad luck. Even God himself did not forget. The book of Exodus records that the Lord pledges to completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. But on this Remembrance Day I also ask myself, how long does Moses want me to remember with an eye to revenge. Because there is something else that infiltrates my memories. Another word about God by another inspired believer in Psalm 103: "He will not harbour his anger forever." But let me confess to you immediately, Moses: "I am still not totally rid of my anger. Yes, I know it – while I must not forget I am also called to cleanse my memory from anger and forgive as I am forgiven so many times by Almighty God."

We have heard something from someone whose word we treasure above all and he

A response

Syd Hielema

This year on Remembrance Day, Rev. Carl Tuyl delivered a meditation in chapel at Redeemer University College. It was a deep privilege for the Redeemer community to hear his personal account of war experiences, his wrestling with the evils that he witnessed, and his challenge to a generation that has not had the same experiences to ponder such realities in a godly manner. That same week Redeemer's chaplain, Dr. Syd Hielema, wrote the following meditation for the professors, staff and students of the university.

Just get rid of it?

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander,
along with every form of malice.
Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other,
just as in Christ God forgave you.
Eph. 4:31-32

As I listened to Pastor Tuyl in chapel as he described some of the WW II atrocities he witnessed and the anger that has left him with, I realized that I and many others carry various angers and other "negatives" inside our hearts too. What do we do with them?

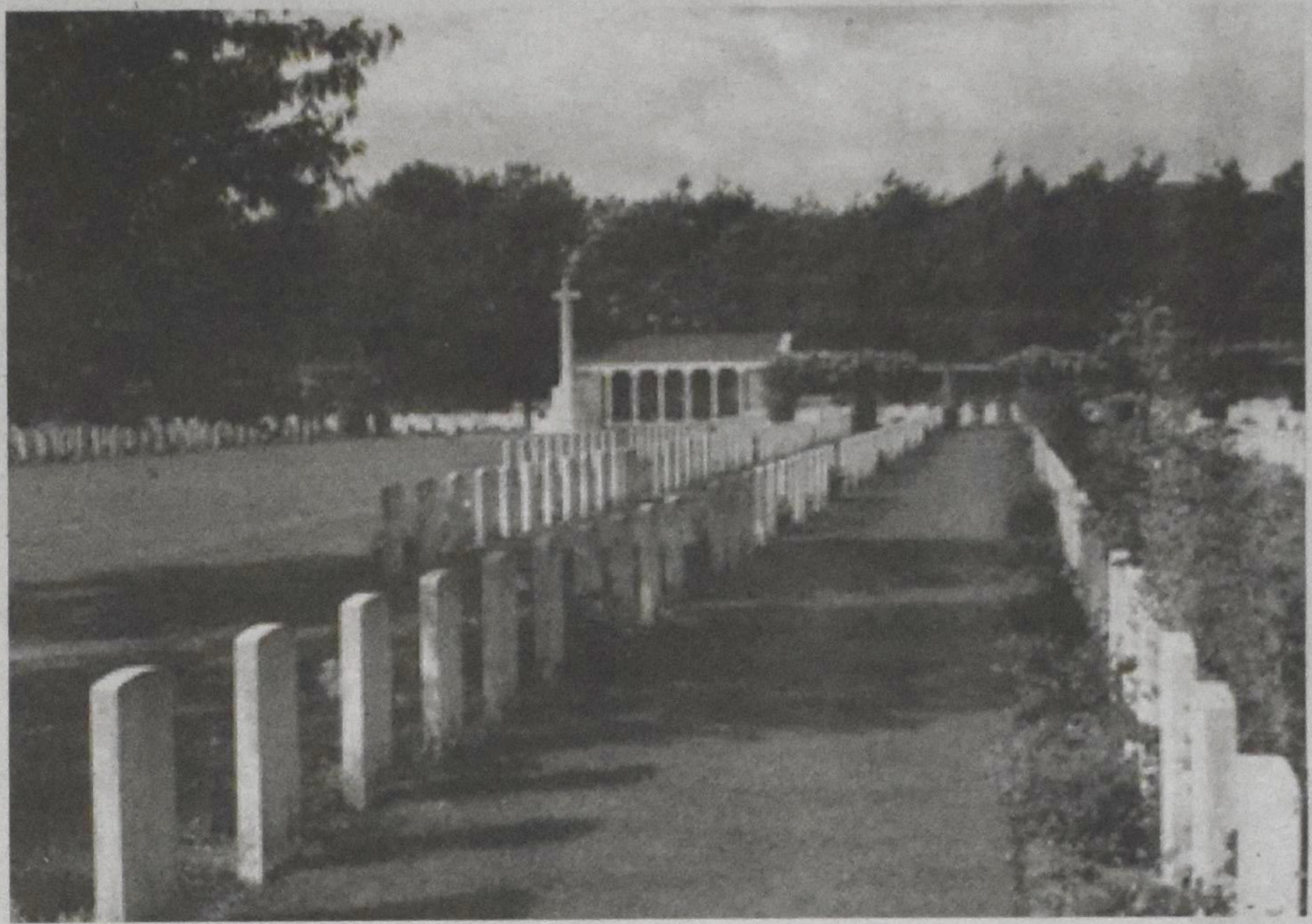
Our culture places a very high value on both truth and freedom. You might say that we breathe in a secular variant of Jesus' teaching, "The truth shall set you free." It works like this: whatever you feel inside – express it! Be true to yourself. If you're ticked off, let the world know. If you need to vent, let loose. If you have an opinion on something, broadcast it. Don't bottle it up; be free! Expressing truthfully whatever is happening inside you shall set you free.

And, of course, electronic communication makes this much easier, and therefore serves the cause of freedom. It's intimidating to say something negative to someone else in person, but electronics makes it easy. Go ahead, send an email, post it on Facebook, tweet away, send a text or use MSN – use them all! It's no surprise that during the past few years words like "cyberrage" and "cyberbullying" have been added to the lexicon. Just do it – you'll feel a lot better.

Poor Paul the Apostle: because he lived in a pre-electronic world, he couldn't vent the way we can today, and so he's stuck with a very mediocre option when faced with the negative stuff inside him. All he can say is, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Is that the best you can do, Paul? Just "get rid of it?" Isn't that lame?

In our home congregations we experience more-or-less closely knit communities, and in close-knit communities we experience one another's brokenness more intensely. Blessings often come with built-in dark sides, and the dark side of community is that it's easy to gradually accumulate bitterness, anger, slander and malice. Wounds that are not worked through fester and become toxic. Hurts that are not forgiven are like cancerous tumors that steadily expand.

And then a LIE takes root in the community: a lie that says, "I have a right to my



Canadian war cemetary in Bergen-op-zoom, Netherlands

anger. Leave me alone."

So what is Paul suggesting? We just get rid of it by pretending that it's not there? A common Christian way of handling anger is to suppress it; keep smiling while it festers inside.

Paul has a better solution. A couple verses earlier he writes, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." In other words, deal with it right away. Talk it through with the one who has angered you, and if that's not possible, talk it through with someone else.

Yes, that's very difficult, but that's living out the truth that sets us free.

The gun shall set you free?

"I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matt. 5:44)
"Those who live by the sword will die by the sword." (Matt. 26:52)
"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Rom.12:18)
"How many times must the cannonballs fly before they're forever banned?
The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind." (Bob Dylan)

Remembrance Day is a special day. Pondering lives lost in causes that sought to subdue oppression, tyranny and injustice is sobering. In our consumerist context in which the word "sacrifice" no longer has much meaning, hearing about those who gave the most anyone can give – one's life – is profound. Yes indeed, Remembrance Day is a special day.

But Remembrance Day is also an ambiguous day. Its origins do not lie in the Christian story but in our nation's and our civilization's stories, and yet many Christians stop for a time of reflection on Remembrance Day.

Look at the two teachings of Jesus quoted above. Some Christian traditions (Mennonite and Quaker especially) have interpreted these to mean that we are called to be pacifists; in this view, fighting in war is never justified. Many other Christians subscribe to some version of "just war theory," taking their cue from Paul's words in Romans – *"IF it is possible...live at peace"* – and conclude that at those times when it is not possible to live at peace, we must go to war.

I'm thankful that we Christians struggle with the place of war in following Jesus. Yes, we know that we are against injustice, oppression, cruelty, and the abuse of human life in any form. But we do not agree on what form that "being against" such things must look like.

Yes, we agree that all human beings should be free – but who defines what human freedom should look like? Is it a Western freedom to live in any way that we want as long as we don't harm anyone else, or is it a Biblical "the truth shall set you free" kind of freedom in which Christ frees us to become the new creation that we are through his blood? On the one hand, the freedom we have received from the gun is Western freedom, not Jesus freedom; on the other hand, Western freedom does give us room to live out our Jesus-freedom in many ways.

As we reflect on the sacrifices of war, we are called to do three things: (1) give thanks for millions who lost their lives in the past and continue to do so today, (2) long for that day when war shall be no more, and (3) wrestle together in the Holy Spirit to discern wise and godly ways of being the light and salt of Jesus in a very broken and violent world.

Syd Hielema is the chaplain at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

My talk with Moses ...continued from p. 10

told us: love your enemies. It is a pretty difficult thing to do, Moses, and I personally confess that I have a ways to go on that path. But as we travel life's journey, awaiting the eternal day, we pray that we may be in tune with God Almighty, and that, while we remember, we can still together set the course to that future of our Lord where righteousness and peace shall embrace each other forever, and violence shall no longer fill the world.

And then, as Judy Chicago writes:

And then all that has divided us will merge;
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with one another and the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Carl Tuyl is a retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Toronto. This article is part of a speech given by Carl Tuyl this November 11 in the Redeemer University College Remembrance Day assembly.

Fear not!

Melissa Kuipers

Typically the holidays are supposed to make us feel all sorts of warm emotions. From the malls to the theatre to the television, we're surrounded by images which conjure up the sense of comfort from being surrounded by friends, nostalgia created by traditions, thankfulness for all the gifts we receive. But this Christmas season I've been thinking about a very different emotion with which we're bombarded: fear. Commercials, for instance, make it clear that if you don't get the right gift for your loved ones, you can expect all sorts of holiday havoc: family arguments, marital disputes, disappointed friends. If a man buys anything for his wife that doesn't sparkle enough to compete with the Christmas tree, the New Year is sure to be pretty unhappy.

Of course, the media don't lay off their fear pandering after the holidays. We live in a culture saturated with messages which tell us what we need to be worrying about. Advertisers often draw on fear tactics to portray an image of what one doesn't want to be (the clueless husband who gives his wife a lame gift) and then create the solution (the wonderfully sensitive spouse who gets showered with hugs and kisses after buying the perfect gift). They're happy to fill us in on the things to worry about: am I attractive enough? Am I keeping up with the trends? Do I make enough money? Do I have enough insurance? Do I fit in?

Life without fear?

And so our lifestyles become littered with fears of all sizes. Our busyness and workaholism make us fear we won't get to work or meetings on time, we won't make the deadline for our projects, we won't have time to relax, we'll put our agendas before our relationships. Our consumerism makes us fear we won't have enough money or efficiency or have the latest technology or be able to keep up with the Joneses. Our obsession with appearance makes us fearful that we won't wear the right clothes or say the right things or drive the right car.

Sometimes I think we fear what might happen if we stop living in fear. Someone recently told me she's afraid to stop worrying about her weight because if she relaxes about it she may actually gain weight and get out of shape. She was afraid to stop being afraid.

I started becoming more acutely aware of fear in my own life upon reading Henri Nouwen's *Lifesigns*. Nouwen introduces the book by saying, "It often seems that fear has invaded every part of our being to such a degree that we no longer know what a life without fear would feel like. There always seems to be something to fear: something within us or around us, something close or far away, something visible or invisible, something in ourselves, in others or in God. There never seems to be a totally fear-free moment."

Nouwen writes about how we are so captivated by fear, how we can't imagine our lives without fear, how fear has become second nature to us. His premise in *Lifesigns* is that love, the enemy of fear, is stronger than fear.

God's message

During the Advent season we remember this love manifested in the incarnation. As I think about Christ's entering this "fear-provoking world," I'm reminded of how often the phrase "do not be afraid" arises throughout scripture, and particularly throughout the Christmas story:

- Joseph is told in a dream, "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit…." (Matt. 1:20)
- The angel says to Zacharias, "Do not be afraid, Zachariah; you're prayer has been heard." (Luke 1:1)
- Gabriel tells Mary, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God."(Luke 1:29)
- The angel encourages the shepherds, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

In a culture so drenched in fear, I've been encouraged this year to become more aware of the times fear creeps into my thinking, and to replace these ideas with the Nativity promises: Do not be afraid. I'm in control. There's a greater purpose in the things going on in your life which don't make sense. I'm doing great things and I'm calling you to be a part of that. There is hope. There is peace. Do not be afraid – I'm here with you. You are not alone.

Melissa Kuipers (mckuip@gmail.com) lives in St. Catharines and teaches English at a Christian high school. She co-leads a club called The Justice League *which raises awareness and funds for social justice issues.*

New Year`s Day

Aria Sawyer

some time ago, and far away…

We stopped in a cloud of dust, which settled on the dirt road behind us. A few fruit trees huddled over the small, low adobe house in the dirt yard. Coffee bushes grew in the yard, and sugar cane. Candy in the garden! Chickens pecked at the hard soil. The outhouse was almost hidden behind the trees.

"Happy New Year! We`re glad you made it." The whole family was there, plus some: Father and Mother, four grown children, a young girl who had been found on their doorstep when she was a baby, a younger boy who was a relative, and a few more guests. They all came to greet us.

Homemade coffee

We walked around the small whitewashed house to the half-open lean-to kitchen with the backless benches at one end, under the roof where the two corner walls were not built. At the other end, coffee was brewing over a small fire on the clay stove.

The coffee was dark and thick. It was cooked with a good piece of sugar cane. In fact, there were two clay jugs of coffee on the stove. "Yes," they joked, "this is real coffee – not factory stuff!" They were referring to the fact that they grew their own coffee, roasted it and ground it themselves, whereas I bought the coffee beans already roasted! What luxury! The coffee was poured into cups and placed on tiny saucers. When I tasted the coffee, I was surprised. It was not sweet at all!

Then I realized why there had been two jugs on the stove: one was cooked without sugar cane, just for us! When they visited us, they had noticed that we drank it without sugar. For their own coffee, they took some mugs off the mug tree – a branch with short, little branches sticking out, stuck onto one of the posts. Their mugs were small, hollowed out gourds into which they poured a little bit of coffee.

Cooking from scratch

While we were chatting over coffee, the children were running around in the yard. They had joined in the chase to catch a chicken for lunch. This was real fun. Although the Duartes were expecting us, they had waited with the chicken until we had arrived, since they had no refrigeration. There was also no telephone, so if something had happened and we were unable to be there, there was no way of knowing. And who would butcher a chicken unnecessarily?

Doña Duarte talked about her children. She told me that besides the four we knew, she also had ten angels. There had been fourteen children in the family, but ten of them had died between the ages of six and eleven years. Two had even died of measles on the same day! We wondered why there was no doctor in the area, or for that matter, no school.

In the meantime a chicken had taken shelter under the chair where I was sitting, for all her fluttering hoping to go unnoticed. Luckily for her, they caught another, and it was butchered. One of our daughters stayed to watch the chicken being defeathered and prepared, while the rest of us were invited to walk down to the river with the son, who took along an egg.

It was a bit of a walk, but there was no rush. After all, it would be a while before the chicken was ready to eat. Cooking from scratch takes on a whole new meaning.

Foot in mouth

We walked along the river a ways. "Here it is," we were told. And there at the edge of the river among the rocks was a small spot where hot water came up. We put in the egg. This way we could experience cooking an egg in the hot spring at the edge of the river! It was fun, and we chatted about life out in the country, while we cooled our feet in the river, a ways from the cooking egg.

Then, back home through the heat of the day. The smell of black beans, caraway, cilantro and chicken greeted us. The table had been moved from under the kitchen roof to under the trees. This way there was room for all – at least to be within the vicinity of the table, with its big pot of rice and beans. There was also a stack of corn tortillas, which were just baked over the fire. Tortillas are a big help in scooping up the food, although there were forks as well. Tortillas, rice and beans, and for a special treat, the chicken. One chicken for all seventeen of us!

We all stood as Don Duarte gave thanks for the meal. Then we were all served some chicken. The bit of chicken one of our daughters got was the foot. She looked. What do I do with this?

Back home

Don Duarte talked about village life. He told us that for a long time he was the only one who could read and write. With a twinkle in his eye, he told us of the time a young man came to him, asking, "Please, could you write a letter for me?" A few days later a young woman came to him, asking, "Please, could you read this letter for me?"

You guessed it. It was the same letter. We all laughed.

After awhile it was time to clean up and go home. It was a long way, and in the evenings cattle tended to sleep on the warm road – hurdles which were to be avoided! We had laughed a lot and learned a lot. It had been a great day.

What a way to start the new year!

Feliz año nuevo!

Aria Sawyer teaches English and Dutch in Hungary, where she lives with her husband, Frank.

People as image-bearers of another

And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man,
so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

I Cor. 15:49

Giambattista Pittoni (1687-1767): The Nativity with God the Father and the Holy Ghost

A. A. Van Ruler

The first thing that strikes us in these words of the apostle is that man or woman is never purely and entirely him or herself. We are all image-bearers and we are carrying that around, so to speak, through our lot in life. But because of our self-consciousness we are not only there, but we also are *aware* of that fact. Even simply knowing that can be quite a burden. Moreover, we also must *want* ourselves and *accept* our being. We must also realize ourselves in all kinds of decision-making and actions. On top of that, we are also part of the world – and remain that way – and for that reason we are also determined by what happens to us. That is our lot in life, and we are bearing that as well.

But the apostle is not thinking about all those things. With great emphasis he says here that we do not only bear ourselves and our lot in life; we must also bear the image of another. One can even say that a person is not merely him or herself, but is the image-bearer of another.

Who are you wearing?

We all bear the image of the physical and earthly one, Adam. We have a father and a mother: we have ancestors. We are human offspring and from the earth. We are a natural body, i.e., a reality governed by the will, a will that is opposed to God's original and ultimate intentions.

We will never be able to rid ourselves completely from this. To some extent, however, we can be detached from this Adam-dependence, such that we do no longer have to bear the image of the physical one. But that does not mean that we then become purely ourselves, for we can only be liberated from the human generation if we are transferred from this community into the one of the saints. We can only be either of Adam or of Christ.

Now that is something about which we will have to make a decision. We love to fall back upon ourselves in order to protect and defend ourselves against the world. But that is impossible, because human life is not that way. A human being is part of a community and bears the image of another. We look like that one. We are standing in the light of the one or in the darkness of the other. We are, in a sense, *wearing* the other and are manifested as either Adam or Christ.

The way things are

But really, that does not concern the apostle very much. We, on the other hand, as westerners in this century, are bothered by that. We have become so very individualistic that it almost takes a sort of conversion to let go of ourselves and become part of that great tapestry which is the church of all times and all places. But for the apostle this is not a question. He is enough of an adult to accept these facts without question or argument.

His question is an entirely different one: We must cross over from Adam into Christ. We do that through our faith and our being born again and our baptism. God himself has appeared in the flesh as the heavenly man. In that fact we have been given the victory over all manner of decay: of sin and of death, of dark powers and of nothingness. In Christ we have been given the full and ultimate reality of *real* life, i.e., *eternal* life. We must strive to participate in that. Having borne the image of the physical one, we must now begin to bear the heavenly one's image.

But let's not infer that the apostle is greatly worried about this. Actually he is not speaking here at all about our crossing over. That conversion, that being born again, that faith and that baptism – those are crises in our existence that amount to a great deal of movement and change, and even restlessness. But the apostle is not speaking about that now. He considers and states all things here quite calmly. He says how things *are.*

Adam is redeemed

So far we have been bearing the image of the physical one. And there was much that was good about that. After all, we are God's handiwork, his creation. Let us be careful not to downplay or minimize that. But God, our Lord, went further than that. He has sent his Son, and for that reason we will also bear the image of the heavenly one. Before we were even born, God (pre)destined us to be conformed to the likeness of his Son (Rom. 8:29) and we expect Jesus who will change our lowly body into a glorified one like to his own (Phil. 3:21). These are all acts of God in the story of salvation. We have become part of that, and we pass from one to another.

William Blake: God Judging Adam

For that reason the word "like" is such a brave word without much ado. There is not even a hint of bitter contrast. It only contains a comparison, and even a parallelizing, of the acts of God. *As much as* we have borne the image of the physical one, *so much* shall we bear the image of the heavenly one. In true apostolic fashion we must take things as they indeed are, i.e., as God does them.

There might be even more to it than just this. There could also be a hint that there is more than just a parallel, that there is even continuity. Then we have more than just distinction. Adam is not put aside, and Christ is not taking Adam's place. Adam is *redeemed* in Christ and brought to his true destiny. The image of the physical one is being transfigured and glorified in the image of the heavenly one. Consequently, present life *continues* in a redeemed fashion in the age of the resurrection.

What we already bear

Meanwhile we do wonder what the apostle imagined the bearing of that image to be like. He spoke – rather haltingly – in previous verses about several images. Like Paul, no one can fully grasp and imagine the consequences.

That's of course always true about an expectation. A thousand images will play through our minds – our soul is reaching out to it. But it is not yet there, not in our hands. We expect it, but we can't say exactly what it is.

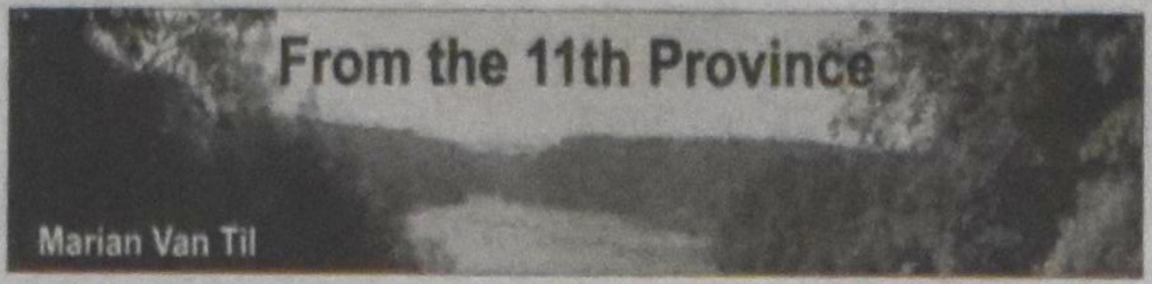
However, in the apostolic gospel there are still two things standing out like rocks.

First, there is the person of Christ. He is the new man, the man from heaven. Looking at him we can see a bit what it's going to be like, particularly looking at his resurrection, which is a solid fact of history. The apostles have seen and even touched him.

Secondly, our image-bearing of the heavenly one is not something purely of the future and of eschatology. Even now, in the *imitatio Christi,* we are unified with him and live a life of love. A person who lives in this world in faith, hope and love is already bearing, albeit in a broken and mostly hidden fashion, the image of the heavenly one. Therefore, the character of the resurrection will not come as a total surprise to those who have lived in Jesus' love.

Translated from the Dutch by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines, Ontario.

Reflections



Thoughts at year's end: *Who is the 'captain of your soul'?*

I have online friends I've known for 10 years. I "met" them on the Patrick O'Brian Internet list, O'Brian of Aubrey-Maturin historic sea novels fame. Some I've met in person, more than once. They are "nice" people, well-read, interesting. A handful are middle-aged women.

None of those women professes to be a Christian, though one has nebulous ties to a mainline church; another grew up in a conservative evangelical home and rebelled against the faith. They believe the world is becoming a better place, thus humankind has no real need of a Savior.

I was astonished when one of them blatantly set down that belief in an email to me. *How can any astute person think we can be our own Savior?* I asked myself. It turns out she made her judgment based on the vastly improved modern treatment of women (which for her includes free access to abortion) and on advances in technology, medicine and the sciences.

I couldn't get her to admit that, nevertheless, we human beings haven't improved morally or spiritually. She believes that the advances she named are proof that we *are* improving, despite evidence such as the increasing disintegration of marriage and breakdown of the family, rises in the levels and sheer viciousness of violence, vastly higher amounts of cheating (on everything from school exams to taxes to spouses), and a disregard for (or thorough incomprehension of) general manners and civility.

This woman isn't an out-and-out atheist, though I'm not sure why not, given her view of God the Inert. Her worldview does not include an acknowledgment that God is active among the world's nations, societies or in people's day-to-day lives. She doesn't believe God created the universe (she's a major Darwin fan), much less that he's upholding that universe. The very chaos, sorrow and tragedy abounding in the world that she claims is improving are evidence to her that God is *not* in control.

For God's people, an alien view

When one grows up having had passed down for centuries the biblical truth that God created this world and is sovereignly in charge of his creation – all of its nations and societies and every single life within it, from the sparrow that falls, to the flower that fades – it's hard to fathom what living life in our difficult modern age would be like when bolstered by beliefs that deny that truth and that make *me*, as an individual human being, the "captain of my fate, the master of my soul" (*Invictus*,1875, William Earnest Henley).

Henley, a British poet whose life spanned the second half of the 19th century and just into the 20th goes farther. His first stanza says: *Out of the night that covers me,/ Black as the Pit from pole to pole,/ I thank whatever gods may be/ For my unconquerable soul.* He talks of "the bludgeoning of chance." Yet "the menace of the years finds, and shall find, me unafraid," he asserts, *because* he is the master of his fate, the captain of his soul. "Invictus" is Latin for "invincible, unconquered." There's no evidence Henley had a change of heart. When he died in 1903 he faced the living God – as we all must – and tragically discovered how inexorably, irreversibly wrong he was.

God whistles, his agents respond

In my daily Bible reading lately I've come across one passage after another that refers to God's control of the nations, to his using them for his own purposes. In the opening chapters of Isaiah (a book I like to start rereading during Advent and finish during Lent) God makes clear that he will use Assyria to punish recalcitrant, idolatrous Israel. That's just one of numerous examples. It's hard to read such passages without wondering about what God is doing among today's nations, about how he is using events, good and bad, for his unfathomable purposes.

That thought made me recall my conversations with my online friend, and *that* brought to mind *Invictus*. I was first assigned that poem by my junior-high Christian school English teacher.

These thoughts seem appropriate for the end of another calendar year, another Year of Our Lord, another year of our Lord's favour – and judgment. The end of a year is a good time to re-acknowledge God's work in our world and in our lives, and our dependence upon him for every breath we take, every blessing we receive, every thorn in our sides. It's a good time to pray, with Francis Havergal: "*Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be in working or in waiting, another year with Thee.... On earth, or else in Heaven, another year for Thee.*"

Marian Van Til is a former C.C. editor who lives in Youngstown, NY, with her husband and five cats. Her book about life with cats, Confessions of a Cataholic, *was released on Reformation Day. For a signed copy see www.WordPowerPublishing.com or write Marian at mvantil@roadrunner.com, or call 716-745-7073.*

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

Lifting the fog on our goals

Writing tells us that we are not powerless. Writing tells us that we have choices.
Julia Cameron – "The Right to Write"

In September and October the swirling fog on our local lake can be softly mysterious and strangely calming. The same fog on our local country roads, however, can be dangerous. Traffic slows to a crawl. Drivers lean their heads out of the side windows trying to keep the car moving in the right direction. When the fog lifts we sometimes discover we are on the wrong side of the road! Should a ten-ton truck be coming straight towards us we would make an instant decision to pull over. Our action is clear, focused and simple because we suddenly "wake up."

But what if the fog does not clear? We won't know we are on the wrong side of the road. If we keep driving we may occasionally have to swerve to avoid oncoming traffic. Eventually, when we have a number of near misses, we may ask ourselves, "Why does this keep happening to me? What seems to be my problem? Why do I attract these cars? When will the fog lift?" Questions that thicken the fog and keep us from "waking up."

And so, on the eve of a new year, I have decided to get out of my own fog and ask different questions so a particular goal I have had for at least two years and going no where, can come to fruition by the end of next year.

Why the deferment?

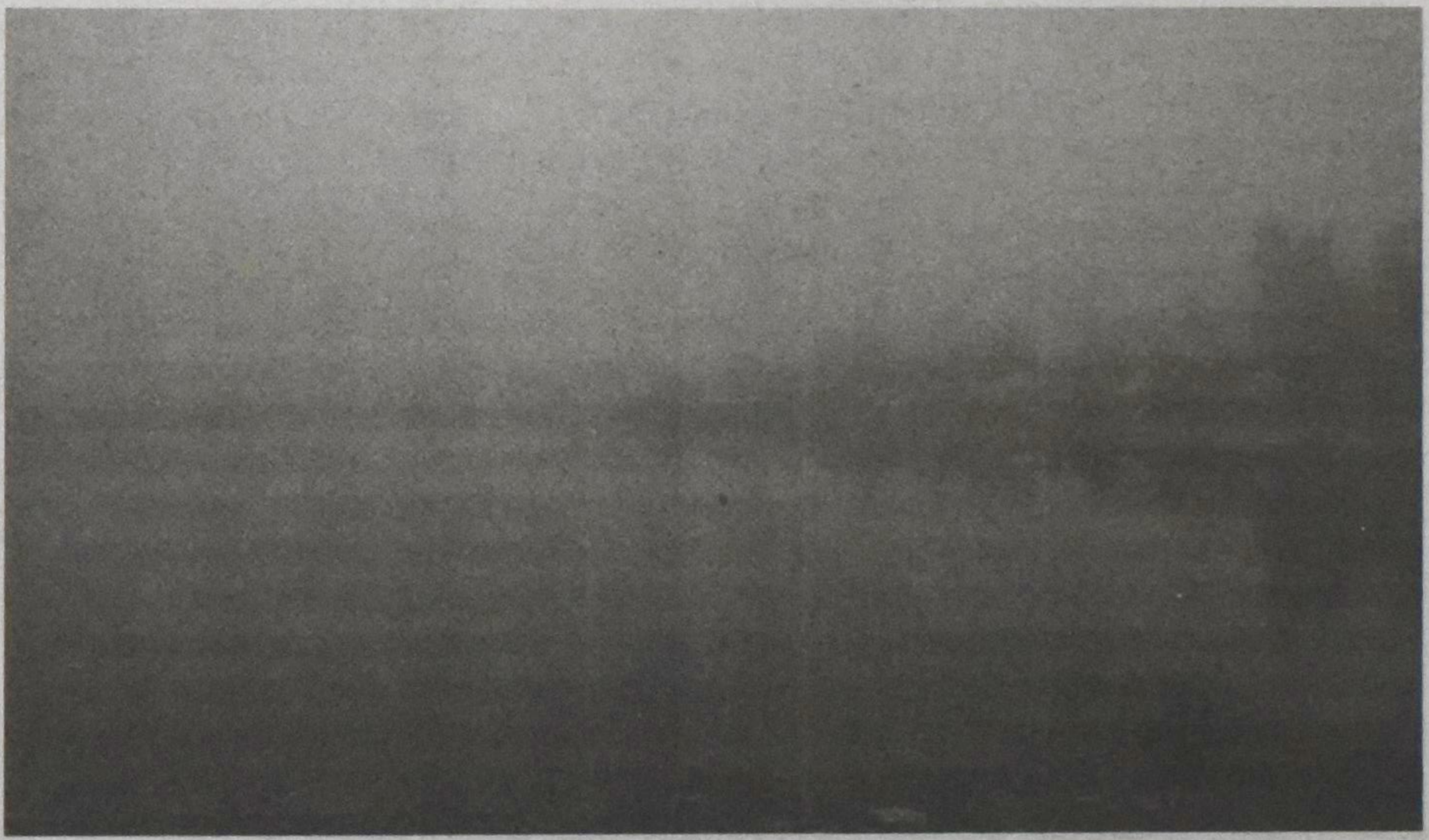
Still, how do we get a picture of our own fog?

First, bring out four pieces of paper. On the first paper think of a goal you have put aside, and list all the reasons why you have done so. Do this quickly and empty your mind even if your writing does not make sense. Keep writing down all the doubts, worries and issues. What are the reasons you have not completed the goal?

Then think of another goal you have not pursued. On a second piece of paper, write the reasons for this goal deferment. Be as specific as you can.

Finally, think of a third, unrelated goal, one from another area of your life. And you know the drill: get down all the reasons on a third piece of paper. Then read what you have written. You will see words or phrases repeating themselves, regardless of the goal!

On the fourth page, write the letter A and list all these recurring words, phrases and themes. Write a B on the same page and list why these reasons make sense. What you tell yourself about these particular worries,



doubts, frustrations and issues.

Then look at A and B on the page – this is an outline of how your mind looks when caught in self-analysis. This is the fog in your mind. If you allow it to clear you may see a 10-ton truck heading straight towards you in which case you will "wake up," focus and pull over!

Let's face it, what we focus on creates our experience of reality. If we focus on endlessly processing our issues, doubts and dilemmas, we get fog. If we focus on what we want to create and contribute, the fog will begin to lift. Strengthen this focus muscle and the fog recedes even further. "Foggy" days or moments will always come around, but they can become the exception – not the rule.

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Co-owning the Earth
Bert Hielema

The end is near

Call me a heretic and I'll say "amen, brother" (or sister), because the word *heresy* comes from the Greek word "hairesis" which means "to go one's way." That's what I try to do, not conform, not crawl along with the crowd, not complacently comply; no, I am busy "working out my salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12).

For me working out my salvation is a constant struggle between how I live and how I should live, because new times need a new approach. A Dutch theologian, Dr J.H.Bavinck, wrote in his book, *De Mens en zijn Wereld,* – and I translate – "we cannot imagine a greater contrast than that between the compelling and concordant composition of creation as it came forth from the hands of God, and the now by-demons-dominated domain, the place where our haunted human tribe abides after the fall into sin."

Why is this man so outspoken? Here is his answer: "The Kingdom is kaput. That is the deep tragedy, a disaster much greater than creation's broken harmony: the earth's meltdown means that God has surrendered his work of art to the powers of the Devil, whose only aim is to abuse and destroy what God has made."

I am afraid that too often I also am his willing ally: each time I drive a car or switch on a light, I aid in creation's destruction.

Bavinck continues, "The kingdom includes all plants, animals, people, angels; it means that sea and earth, mountain and valley, past, present and future are part of a powerful and meaningful entity, in which everything has its perfect place and in which every tiny item functions properly and deploys its inherent power in total unity and in complete symbiosis with its surroundings. That peaceful stability has been broken." So far Dr. Bavinck.

God's overarching love

The Copenhagen meeting earlier this month was a feeble attempt to restore a bit of balance. I believe that James Lovelock was right when he wrote in his *The Revenge of Gaia, Earth's Climate in Crisis and the Fate of the Earth:* "We have driven the Earth to a crisis state from which it may never, on a human time scale, return to the lush and comfortable world we love and in which we grew up."

Frankly I cannot understand how John 3:16 "God so loved the world," is almost always understood to mean that God's love is restricted to the human race. However, the Greek original says, God so loves the "cosmos," the totality of life. If God loved all that lives, shouldn't we do the same? Shouldn't we also love trees, seas, air, animals, with every fiber in our bodies, every day, every hour? Shouldn't that be the focus of our lives, the essence of "being born again"?

If it is sin to kill and to steal, then surely it is a sin to destroy carrying capacity – the ability of the earth to support life now and in the future. To give back to God the gift of creation in a degraded state capable of supporting less life, less abundantly, and for a shorter future, is surely a sin.

I know it's much easier to believe in heaven, to escape this earth and its wickedness than to conduct ourselves as co-owners and so treasure the earth as our dearest possession. It requires fear and trembling to live so today that when Christ returns we have no trouble fitting into the new creation that is about to come.

A dire future

In these end-times a new religious focus is needed. The world realizes already that we live in the last days. During November two movies were released, and next January two more will be, all four films dealing with Apocalypse.

(1) 2012. Massive shifts in the Earth's crust lead to earthquakes, volcanoes and tidal waves, all in keeping with Mayan prophecy – a movie already wildly successful.
(2) THE ROAD. An unidentified cataclysm, possibly nuclear, plunges the earth into darkness and cold, eliminating most of life on earth – also to great acclaim.
(3) DAYBREAKERS. A plague has put vampires in charge of society, but their greedy, unsustainable corporate-hunting practices have almost destroyed the food supply.
(4) LEGION. God has become tired of all "our BS" and decides to exterminate humanity by sending his angels – insect-like humanoids with extendable limbs and expandable claws – to kill us.

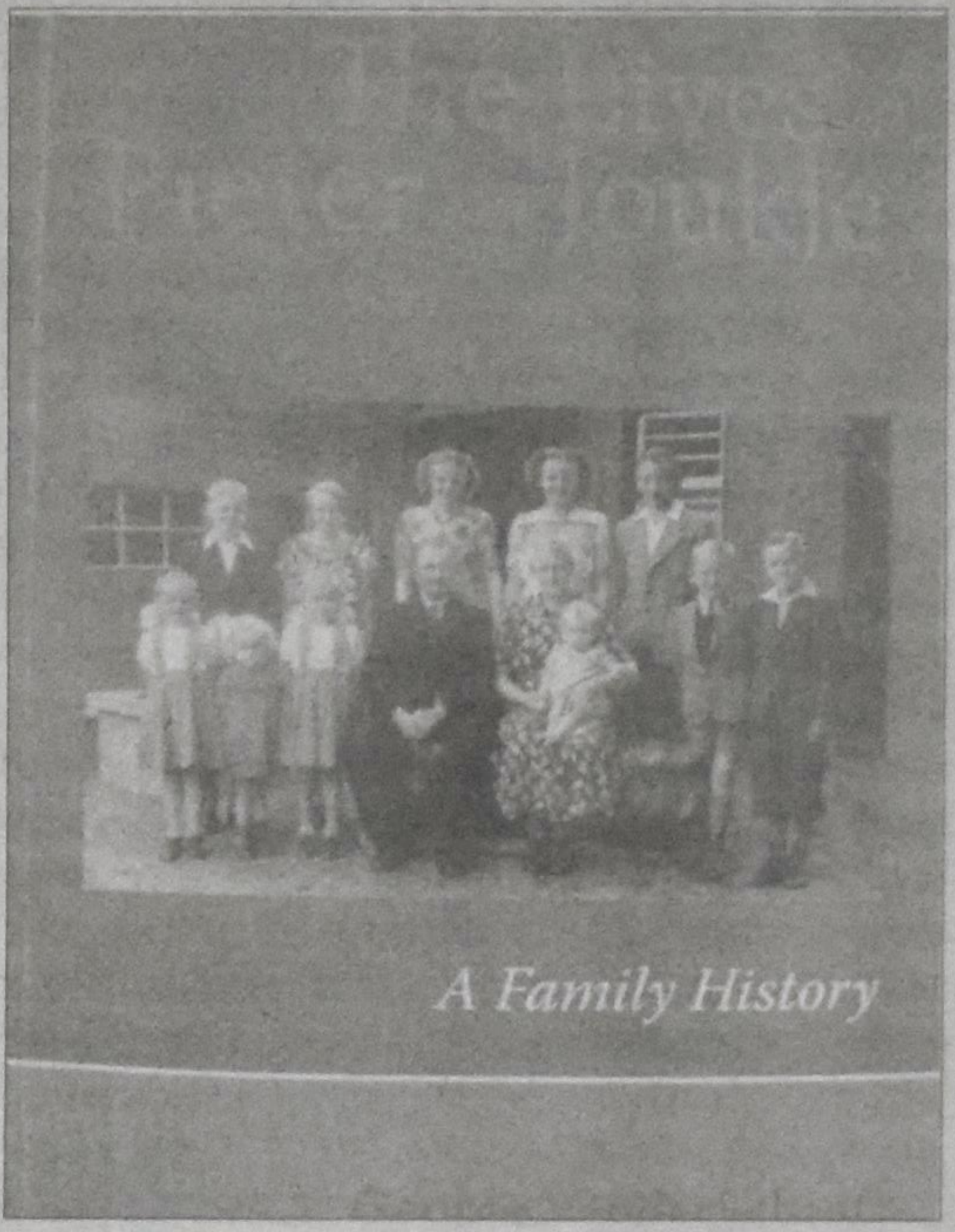
Here is a thought from a Christian historian, John Lucacs, who wrote: "The fear or anticipation that something may happen may cause it to happen (a view of 'a future' may cause 'the present')." In other words, the fear that the earth may experience a tremendous upheaval, as these four movies try to tell us, may bring it about.

We are on the verge of a New Year – not yet 2012, but 2010. Perhaps the Lord will come back this coming year. We, of course, don't know the Day or the Hour, but all signs point that his coming is imminent.

Bert Hielema was born in 1928, lives in Tweed, Ont., is the sole tenor in a 12 voice church choir. This article and other writings can be seen at http://hielema.ca/blog/; Comments to bert@hielema.ca

Pieter VanderSchaaf, Frisian Everyman

Angela Reitsma Bick



The Lives of Pieter and Joukje, by George VanderSchaaf, is the fruit of a conversation many of us have had: "Somebody should write Mom and Dad's story down while there's still time." Now is the time to ask principle characters for details; time to catch the grandchildren's interest before too many years make the names unrecognizable. This family history chronicles the lives of VanderSchaaf's parents, Pieter and Joukje, from their teenage years in Friesland to retirement in Ontario. Many *CC* readers will know the friends, neighbours and co-workers of the VanderSchaafs that populate the book. And if you don't recognize specific names, the story will be familiar to any immigrant. The book's strength is its honesty: instead of rose-coloured memories, VanderSchaaf is frank about money struggles, job losses, and the ways that life in Canada challenged the faith of this couple from the village of Wouterswoude.

It is clear throughout that this is not a novel but a piece of history; there is no overarching narrative other than (as the title indicates) the lives of Pieter and Joukje. I often found myself wishing for more than the occasional anecdote, which pepper the long recitation of facts. While VanderSchaaf has amassed an impressive collection of detail, sometimes the minutia is exhausting. We don't need to know the names of wedding guests, or the family history of every person marrying into the VanderSchaaf clan. On the other hand, I appreciated the cultural snapshots, such as a comparison between the discussion of *het geloof* (religious beliefs) in Wouterswoude to debates on the Vietnam war at the Young Peoples Club at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Brampton. The descriptions of Joukje's return trips to the village of her youth in Friesland are poignant.

Overall, I enjoyed following the life of this Frisian family, representative of so many who faced the decisions of whether to leave Holland, where to settle in Canada and how to move forward in a new country without completely forgetting where they'd come from.

The Lives of Pieter and Joukje is published by Pandora Press. To order a copy, email gmv@sentex.net. Costs are $20, including postage.

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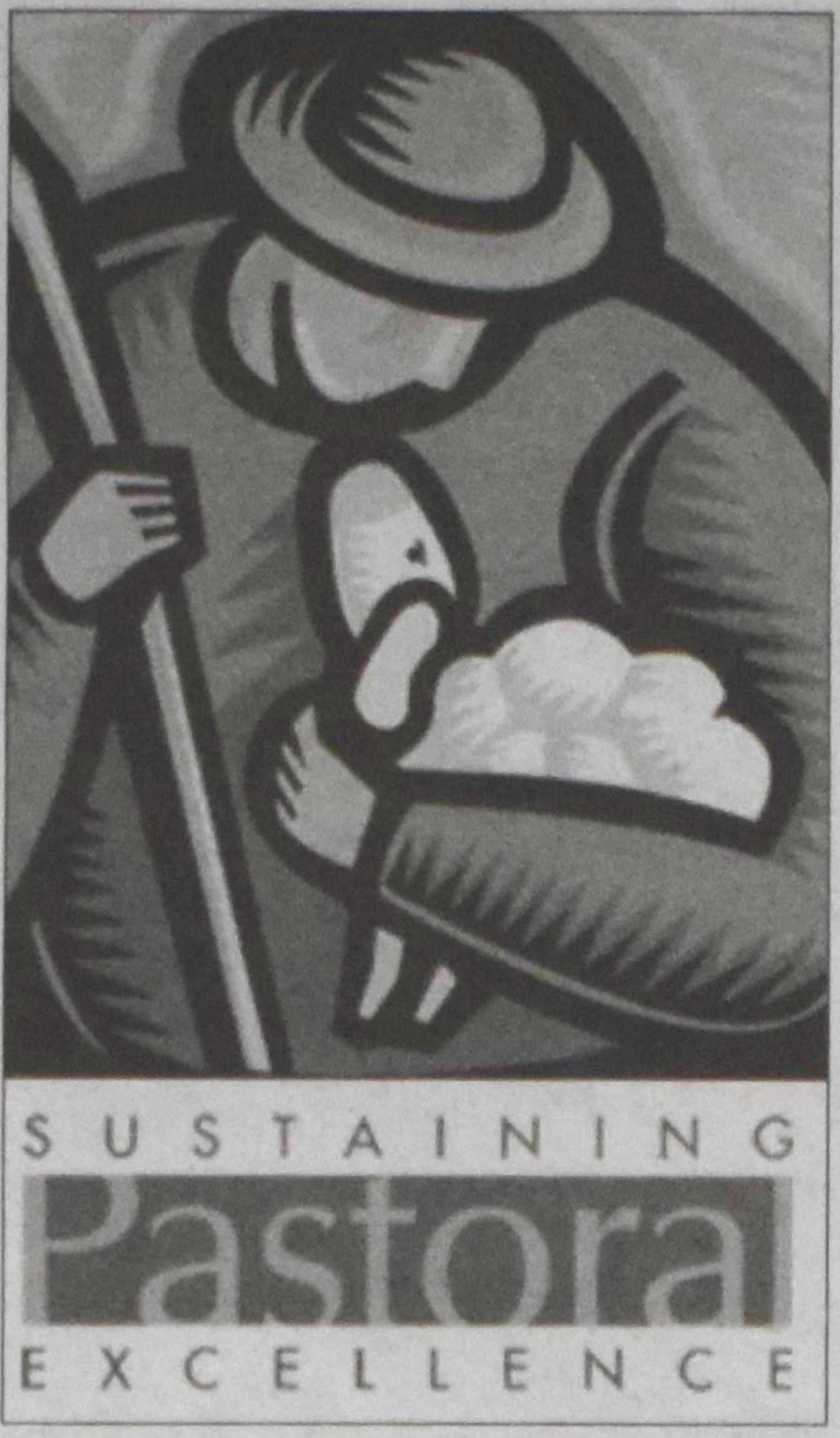


'Just' love your neighbour

Karen Wilk

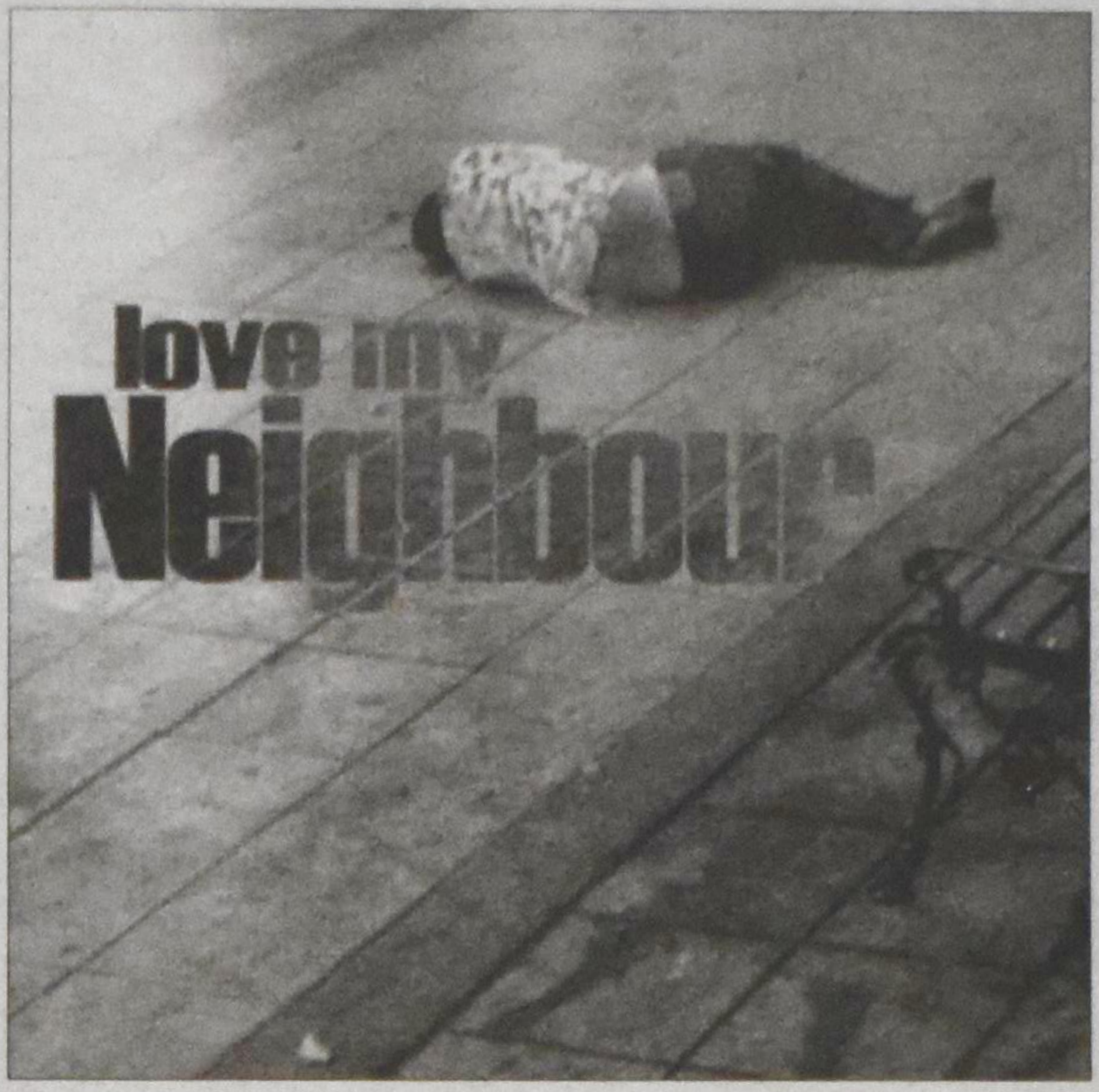
We read and hear a lot of talk about healthy churches these days. It's funny, though, the Bible never uses such a phrase. Of course, Paul, John and others certainly address issues in the church that indicate some "church health" concerns but striving for a "healthy church" is never mentioned. Nor is church success – which may be equally surprising to some. We don't read about a particular church being successful. There are no scorecards nor evaluations nor statistics describing attendance records or giving amounts or number of people serving. We do see the local gathering of believers doing all these things as it manifests the Kingdom of God by its words, deeds and community life.

So, if the Bible doesn't talk about being healthy or successful as congregations, what does it talk about? Faithfulness. We'll be judged by our faithfulness. We're called to be faithful. (Matt.24:45, 25:21; Luke 12:42, 16:10-12, John 8:31, Acts 11:23, 2 Tim. 2:2, 4:7, Rev.2:10, 17:14). What does it mean to be faithful? Perhaps it starts by keeping the greatest commandment.

Love or be nice?

"For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" Galatians 5:14 (NRSV)

What if we were actually to love our neighbour? What if God has actually placed us where we are – on our street, in our apartment block – to be the Presence of Jesus there; to demonstrate his grace and compassion to the people next door, the people right in front of our noses, our neighbours? What if there was more to this greatest commandment than just trying to be nice to everyone, which usually ends up meaning that we're nice to no one in particular? What if it actually is a call to love, be of use to, care for, go out of our way for *our* neighbour? What difference would it make to us and our church and our neighbourhood if we truly loved our neighbours? Perhaps more than we could ever ask or imagine. Perhaps it would transform us, our neighbours, and our communities. That's what city leaders seem to think, anyway.



The mayor of Arvada (Denver, Colorado) was asked to address a group of pastors representing twenty churches about his dream for the city and the issues that were hindering that dream from becoming a reality. Bob came with a list of pervasive issues/problems such as at-risk kids, elderly shut-ins, dilapidated housing and hunger. However, before talking about these Bob shared that, "after thinking about all of these things, it occurred to me *that what our city really needs are good neighbours*." He went on to say, *"the majority of the issues that our community is facing would be eliminated or drastically reduced if we could just become a community of people who are great neighbours."*

As one pastor put it, "here we are asking the mayor what areas of the city are most in need, and he basically tells us that *it would be great if we could just get our people to obey the second half of the Great Commandment."*

Wisdom from Nike

The next question, then, is how? In 600 words or less, we can only scratch the surface, but in three words or less Nike captured it: *Just do it*. Intentionally, faithfully, sincerely love *your* neighbour. Start by identifying your neighbourhood. For most of us, the place to begin is with the people, the households on our street. Make a map of your block with little houses on it. In each house write the names of the family members including their pets, occupations, hobbies, recreational activities and their needs: emotional, relational, and spiritual. Did I lose you on the first instruction? Then it's time to take time to meet your neighbours. Stop and introduce yourself. Host a neighbourhood open house. That's what we did.

A number of years ago we put invitations to a Neighbourhood Open House in our neighbours' mailboxes because we were too chicken to knock on their doors! We knew the people next door by name and one other family whose daughter was a similar age to our own, but that was it. The day arrived, and we had no idea who (or if anyone) might come. The first couple who knocked on the door exclaimed, before they had their coats off, that they just had to come to see who would do such a crazy thing as invite total strangers into their home! And we've been having a blast getting to know our neighbours ever since – Bridge for Fun; backyard campfires; Wine, Cheese and Art nights, etc.

We now have a bi-weekly women's gathering. Others are volunteering to host events. We expanded our neighbourhood and together hosted a block party, and about 75 people showed up! We had a garage sale, and when my husband and I mentioned that we had decided to donate our earnings to buying bikes for community workers in Zambia and everyone else decided they'd like to do that too. They took over and organized a hot dog sale and a gift basket draw which you could participate in if you made a donation. By the time we were done, we had raised close to $1,600! God is at work in our neighbourhood, deepening conversations, opening spiritual windows, building community, and all we did was offer hospitality.

The other important starting place is prayer. Pray for your neighbours. Prayer moves the hands of God. Prayer changes things. God acts in response to our prayers. Pray for your neighbours by name. Pray the Lord's prayer on their behalf: *Your kingdom come, Your will be done in their lives, in our hood....* Pray for opportunities to connect, for authentic relationships, for discernment and for eyes to see what God is up to on your street, and then partner with Him. That's one of the most incredible things about moving back into our neighbourhoods – we discover that God is already there!

For more on transforming lives and communities by loving your neighbours, pick up a copy of Karen's new book, *Don't Invite Them to Church – A Devotional Guide to Pursuing God's Mission in Your Neighbourhood* and/or contact her at kwminstry@shaw.ca 780-483-8064

Karen Wilk is the pastor of discipleship and outreach at The River Community Church in Edmonton, AB.

"Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." Romans 12:13

"Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:1b, 2

"He can't quit talking about it, going over again and again the story of your prompt obedience, and the dignity and sensitivity of your hospitality. He was quite overwhelmed by it all!" 2 Corinthians 7:15

"It was by faith that Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed with the people in her city who refused to obey God - For she had given a friendly welcome to the spies." Hebrews 11:31

"The gift of hospitality is supposed to operate in the life of every mature believer. This gift invites people, prepares a party that draws people, and makes sure everyone feels special. If it's been awhile since you had people over, consider an event that you would enjoy and launch your strategy. God values people being with other people, sharing life. It won't happen by accident. Hospitality is a gift that requires effort, and creates life." Author unknown

"I live here too – I, God, live in the same neighbourhood with the People of Israel." Numbers 35:34 (MSG)

"I'll set up my residence in your neighbourhood; I won't avoid or shun you; I'll stroll through your streets. I'll be your God; you'll be my people." Leviticus 26:11-12a (MSG)

"Shout and celebrate, Daughter of Zion! I'm on my way. I'm moving into your neighbourhood!" Zechariah 2:10

"I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: 'Look! Look! God has moved into the neighbourhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God.'" Revelation 21:3

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood." John 1:14a (TMSG) – *your neighbourhood, our neighbourhood!*

"He said, 'That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself.'
'Good answer!' said Jesus. 'Do it and you'll live.'" Luke 10:27,28 (MSG)

Travel / For Sale / Jobs

Obituaries

Wons, Friesland
August 20, 1932

Peterborough,Ontario
December 7, 2009

God took to be with him

J Edward Rusticus

Ed was predeceased by Jane Folkema (1987)
and is survived by their loving children
Owen, Martin (Shayna), Sheila and Eric (Stacy)
and 4 grandchildren
He is loved and respected by his wife Rose
and her children Elaine (Pete), Valerie (Norm),
Geoff, John (Jen) and Christine (Steve).
Grandpa Ed will be missed by the 19 Sikma grandchildren
and 2 great-grandchildren.

The funeral service was held in Peterborough at Cephas CRC on Dec 11. Pastor Ken Ritsema led the service celebrating Ed's life in Word and music. Psalm 62:5-8 was and will continue to be our source of strength and hope.

Correspondence address: 1470 Fair Ave
Peterborough ON K9K 1H2

Margaretha Helena Van Die (nee **de Klerk**)

On November 24, 2009 at age 94, our dear mother, grandmother, and great grandmother entered her eternal home. Predeceased by her husband Willem (1987), she was the beloved mother of:

Marguerite
Peter (Carole)
Joanne (Bill Brown)
Andy (Dorella)
and the proud Oma of 9 grandchildren
and 5 great-grandchildren.

The last survivor of a close knit family of ten, she was born in Zwijndrecht, the Netherlands, and in 1950 immigrated with her husband and children to the Peterborough area. A founding member of Cephas Christian Reformed Church, she served her church community for almost sixty years with her gifts of historical memory and love of people.

The funeral service was held November 27, 2009 at Cephas Christian Reformed Church in Peterborough.

Correspondence address: Joanne Brown
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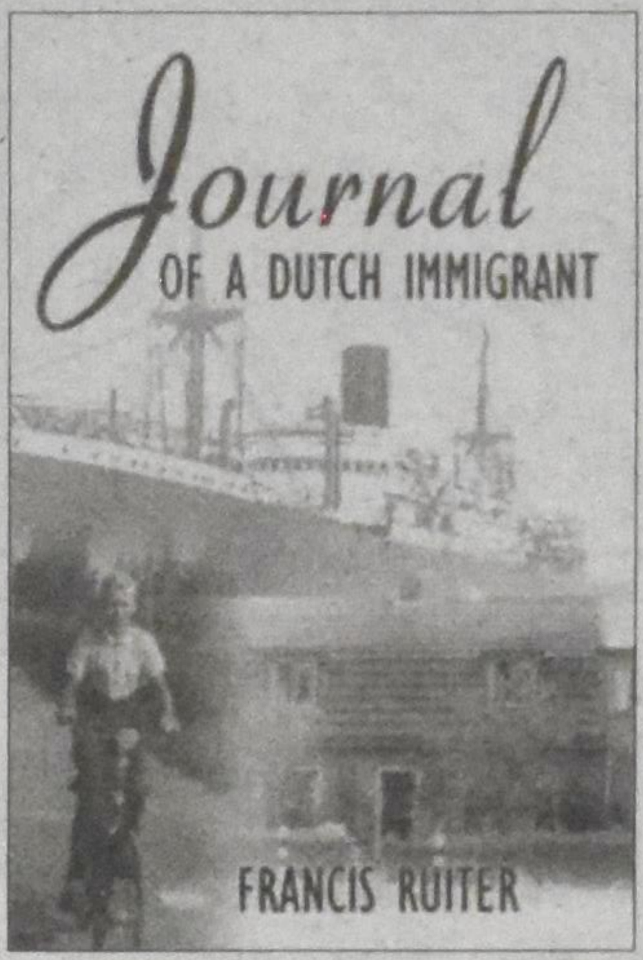

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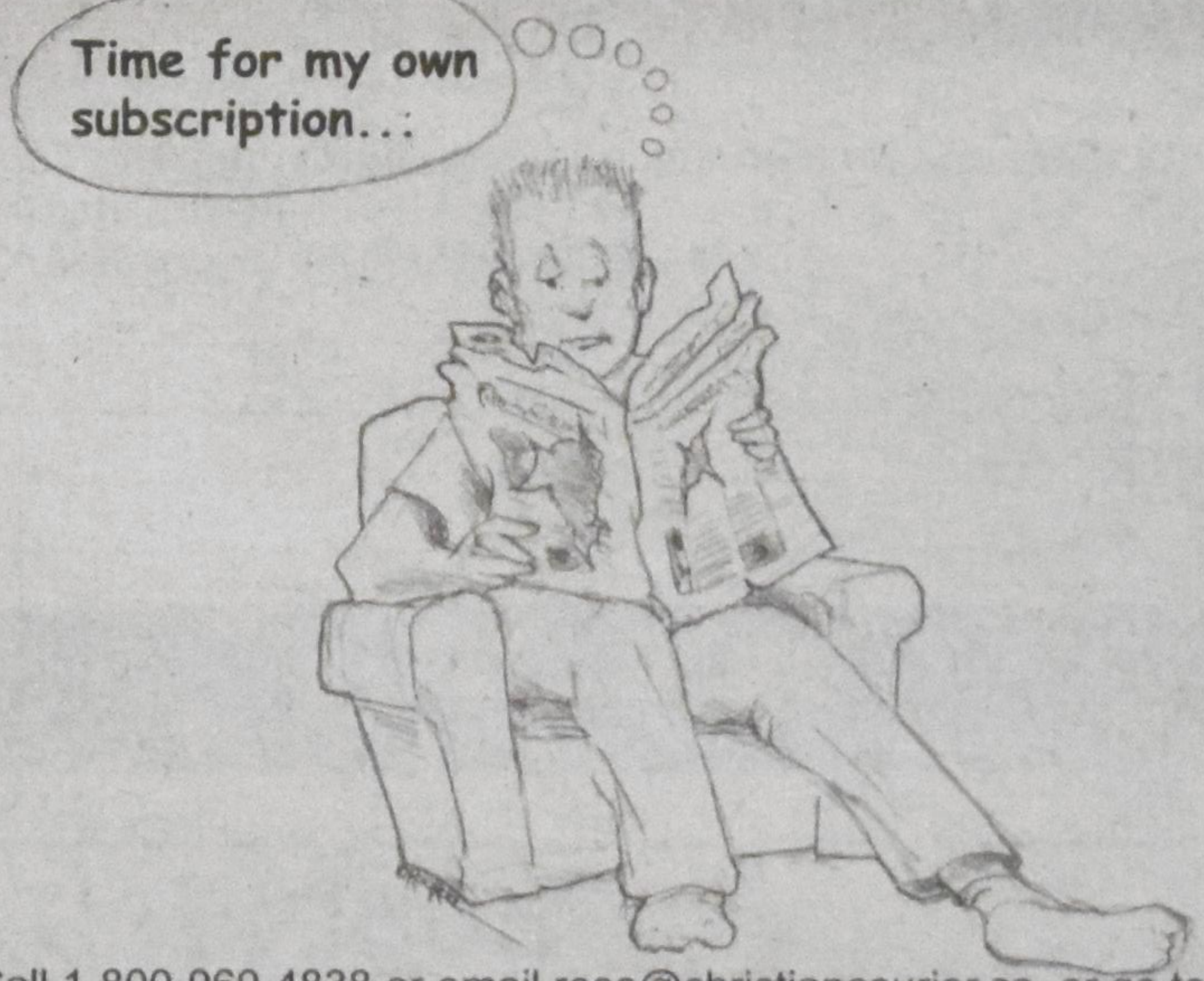

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2				6	5		9	
	6	9		8		1	4	2
	9					2	8	
			3		7			
	4	3					7	
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	8		5	1				9
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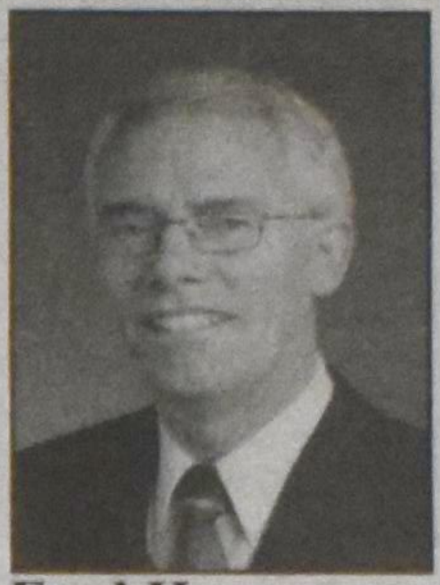

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2010

Jan 13 The World and our Calling Annual Lectures at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. Dr. James Payton, Jr. will be speaking on 'Calvin in Focus'. Invitation is open and admission is free. For more information contact Marlene Raddatz at 905.648.2131 X4414 or mraddatz@redeemer.ca See. ad.

Jan. 24 Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m.

June 26, 27 Come celebrate the 50th anniversary of HCCS (formerly Athens Christian School). Contact us at www.hccs.ca or 613 498 4176.

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Wednesday, January 13, 2010

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Calvin: Champion of Piety
Evening Public Lecture: 7:00 p.m.- 9:00 p.m., Room #214

Calvin the Humanist
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Tuesday, January 19th, 4:00 p.m., Boardroom

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News

Getting down to business: EWF moves beyond charitable aid

Angela Reitsma Bick

Dambisa Moya is a Zambian economist making waves with a New York Times bestseller called *Dead Aid: why aid is not working, and how there is a better way for Africa* (2009).

"Aid has financed consumption rather than investment," she says. "Study after study . . . have shown that after many decades and many millions of dollars, aid has had no appreciable impact on development."

Although some aid organizations have responded defensively to Moyo's argument that aid leads to dependency rather than development, many leading thinkers agree with her.

As World magazine points out, "Sixty years ago roughly 10 percent of [Africa's] population lived on a dollar a day, and today over 70 percent live on a dollar a day."

But if aid hasn't been successful, what is? Moyo suggests using Africa's resources to make it a legitimate trading partner. In other words, focus on business rather than traditional forms of aid.

> "After thirty years and trillions of dollars, most countries receiving aid were just as poor as when the aid started." William Duggan, in *The Aid Trap: Hard Truths about Ending Poverty*.

Rwanda jumped from 143 to 67th place in the World Bank's annual assessment because President Kagame made it easier for investors to do business in his country. And Kagame, reportedly, purchased copies of Moyo's book this summer for every member of his cabinet.

Christine Eisses, 28, has been thinking about this issue for years. She's the founder and president of *Emmanuel's Wish Foundation* (EWF), an example of how the focus of aid organizations is changing – for the better – from charity to business-oriented models.

A new culture of aid

EWF is a Canadian organization committed to helping South Africans, Kenyans and Haitians find leadership roles and paid employment in their own communities. In the following interview, Eisses talks about Dead Aid, a man called Emmanuel, and how EWF works.

CC: What is Emmanuel's Wish Foundation?

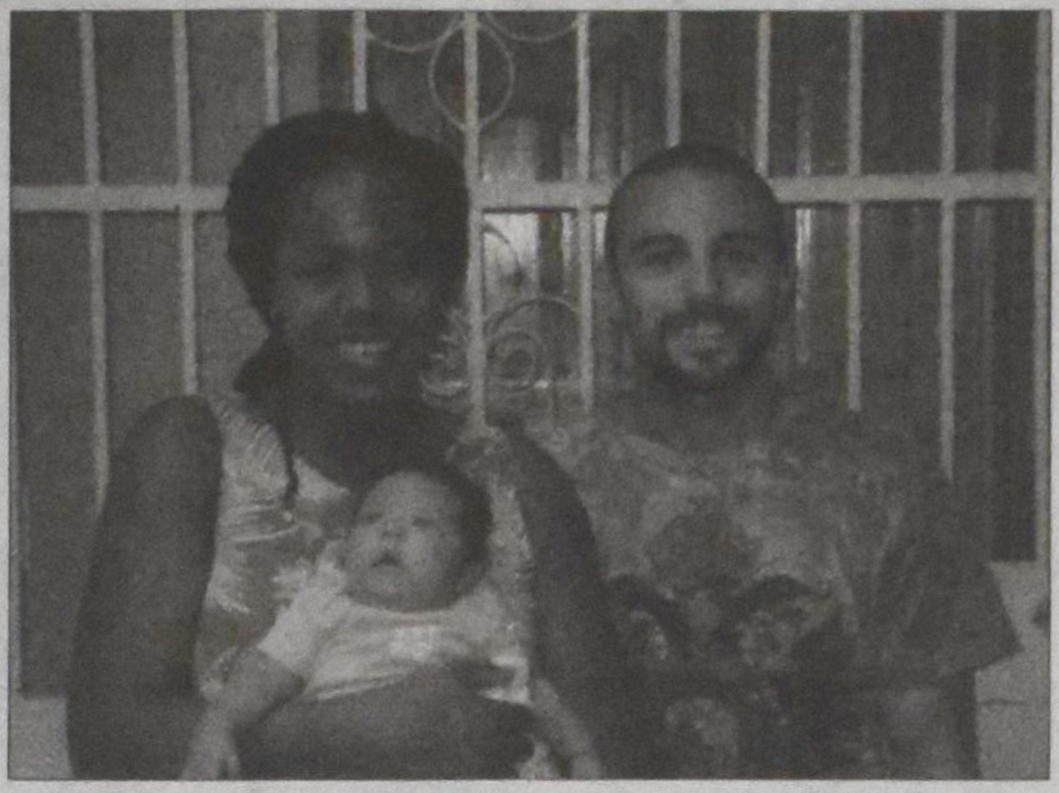
Eisses: Our main goal is to come alongside nationals working in their own country; we don't come in and tell them what to do. We work with them: identify their needs, assist with financing, and hopefully bring them to some place where they're self-sustainable, and we can separate our funding and leave them. We've done that successfully in Kenya, where we set up a school and a medical clinic that's been on its own for a few years. In South Africa we're just finishing our funding of a transitional home there, and provided capital costs for some foster homes. We're building a church in Haiti right now, and planning a hospice in South Africa.

CC: What does your organization's name mean?

Eisses: Emmanuel is two-fold. Because we're Christian, it's a reminder to be doing this as God would have us do. And Emmanuel is a person I met once on a mission trip in the Philippines. It was at a garbage dump where 10,000 people scrounge every day for food to feed their families. Part of being there was to show them God's grace, remind them that someone loves them, and help them fight for their rights to be there.

I was heading towards a group of men, when a voice came from the right side, saying "Hey, what about me?" I turned around, and there was a man standing in the garbage. I sat down with him and we started talking. We talked and talked, for hours. I didn't get up from that spot. He really struggled with believing in a God that could leave him there, a God that could allow such extreme poverty when others are living such rich lives. We talked about how this world is unjust, but in heaven all things will be made right. My team was leaving, but I kept talking.

Eventually, as we were saying good-bye,



EWF's project managers in Haiti: the Reid family

Nap-time in Haiti

we were both crying, and he said, "Christine, please don't forget me." This is huge for them, because they are a forgotten people; they don't exist for their government. So I promised I would remember him, and whenever anyone asks I tell this story.

CC: Is it true that too much aid or the wrong kind of aid actually hinders development?

Eisses: I think it's the wrong kind of aid. When we say trillions of dollars, we're talking government to government, packages to packages. Our government gives money with strings attached. So the money that's not taken by corrupt rulers is just sent back to our countries in the form of debt repayment.

CC: Can you give an example?

Eisses: Let's say a mining company from Canada wants to dig for gold or diamonds in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In order to do this, they have to get into the Congo. So they say they're going to bring in roads, all kinds of stuff, in order to get to the mine. So the mining companies come in and create huge highways, electricity, amenities, and then slap huge bills onto these countries worth billions of dollars.

> "I hope that Christians will start thinking about where their donor dollars are going." Christine Eisses

CC: What are the alternatives?

Eisses: Cancelled debt – now that's a solution. If our countries would cancel the debt that these countries owe us – falsely – then that would be helpful. That's how we could help. But we don't, because that would mean that we don't get our money back. And so we allow the cycle.

There are a few ways to do [aid] right, and a lot of ways to do it wrong. I don't think there's a way for the government to give well. There are too many hands crossing each other; it goes mainly to other governments. The only way to go is through small, non-government organizations (NGOs). With larger organizations, it's harder to track the money, and harder not to spend it on administration.

CC: Are you familiar with Dambisa Moya's book *Dead Aid*? She says "Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world."

Eisses: EWF is painfully aware of the concept of "dead aid", and how important it is for our projects to not be ours. As an example, we're now moving forward with opening an AIDS hospice in a small town called Richmond, a farming community in South Africa. In this town, for black Africans, there are no jobs aside from being a farm worker and making a 100 a month to feed your family. When we open our hospice, we'll have 10 employees. But our goal is to have the hospice not be supported by Canadians forever. So, alongside of that we've already started a guest house, a B+B. It's its own business, running on its own, and it's turned a profit every month since January. The purpose of this B+B is to employ some people and to fund the hospice. So every cent to support the hospice will be generated within South Africa. This is our model, and we're going to grow from that.

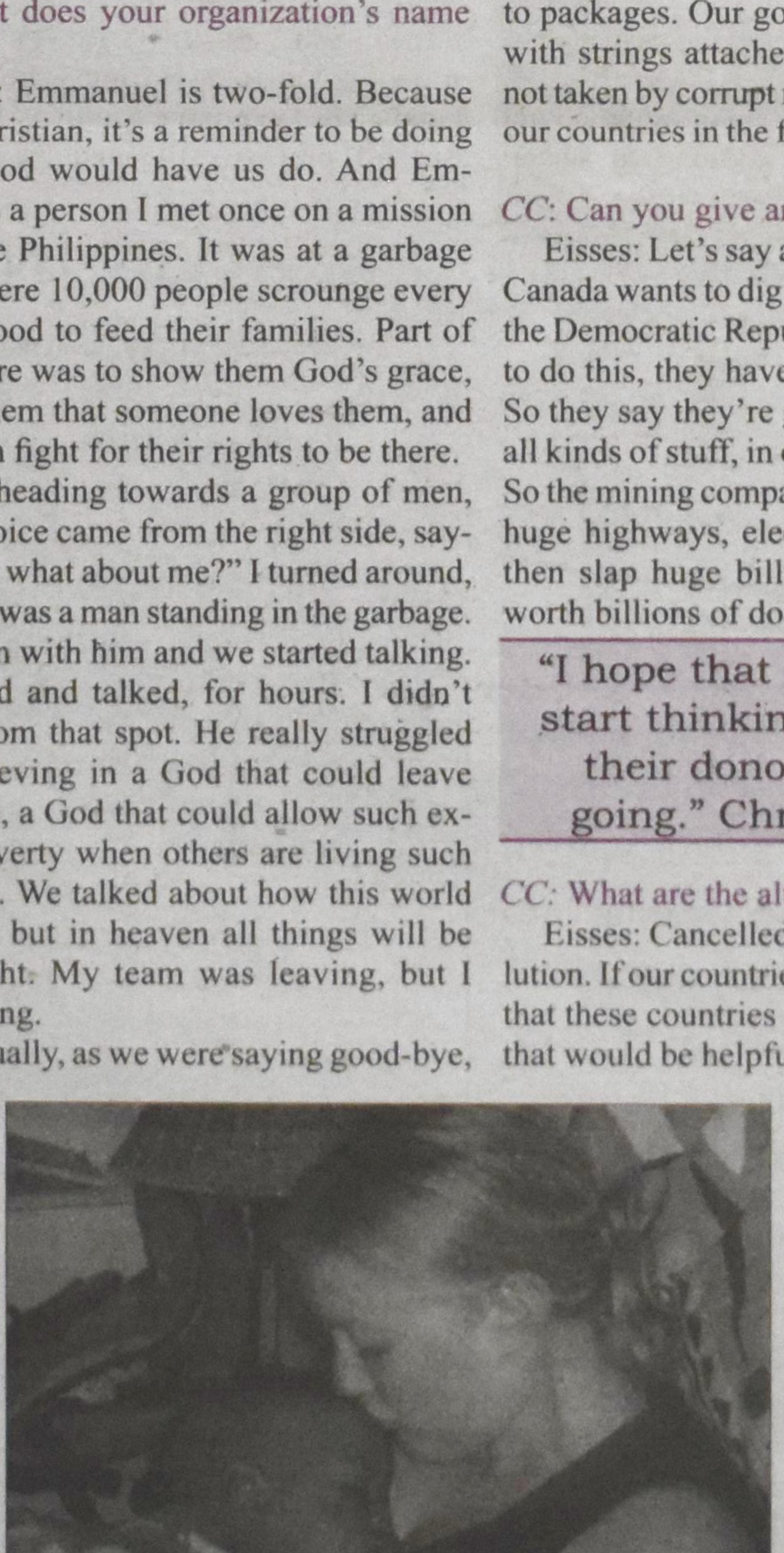
In Haiti it will be something different. We started building a church, but that will then grow into job creation and farm initiatives, because Haitians have lost the ability to feed themselves as a country – which is crazy, because they had no problem doing this until a few years ago – and it's because of faulty aid.

Not just giving and giving – we want to help people look after themselves. These men and women are exactly the same as we are. These husbands want to provide for their wives and children. They want the opportunity – they don't want an NGO to hand over school fees and an outfit for their daughter to go to school; they want to go out there and buy it themselves! It strips them of something to take that away from them.

There are some needs that have to be addressed immediately, but we will always do it with business in mind.

Angela Reitsma Bick (angelabick@gmail.com) is co-editor of Christian Courier *and lives in Barrie, Ontario.*

Eisses at Huruma Children's Home in Kenya.



Eisses in South Africa with a sick baby.